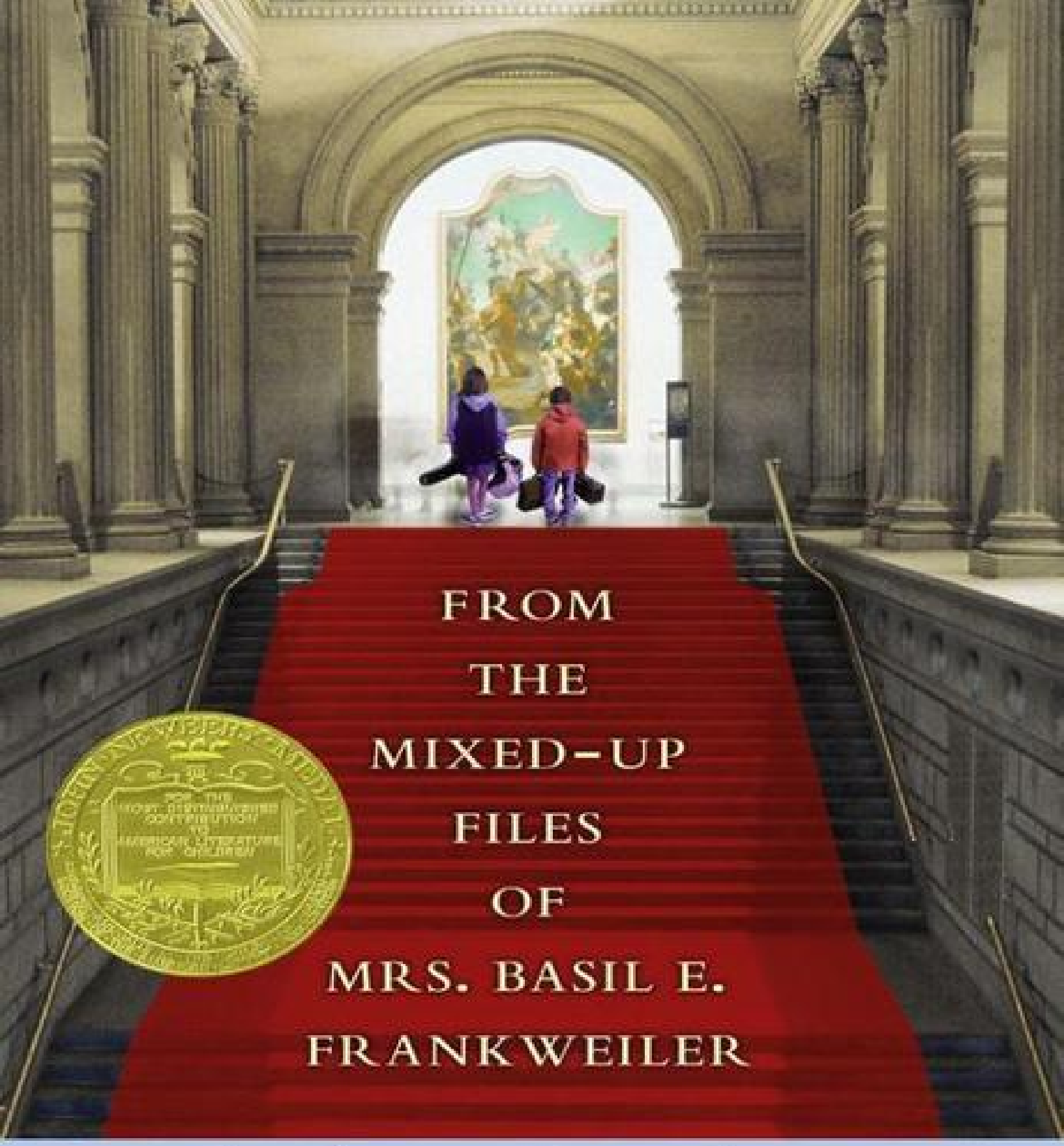
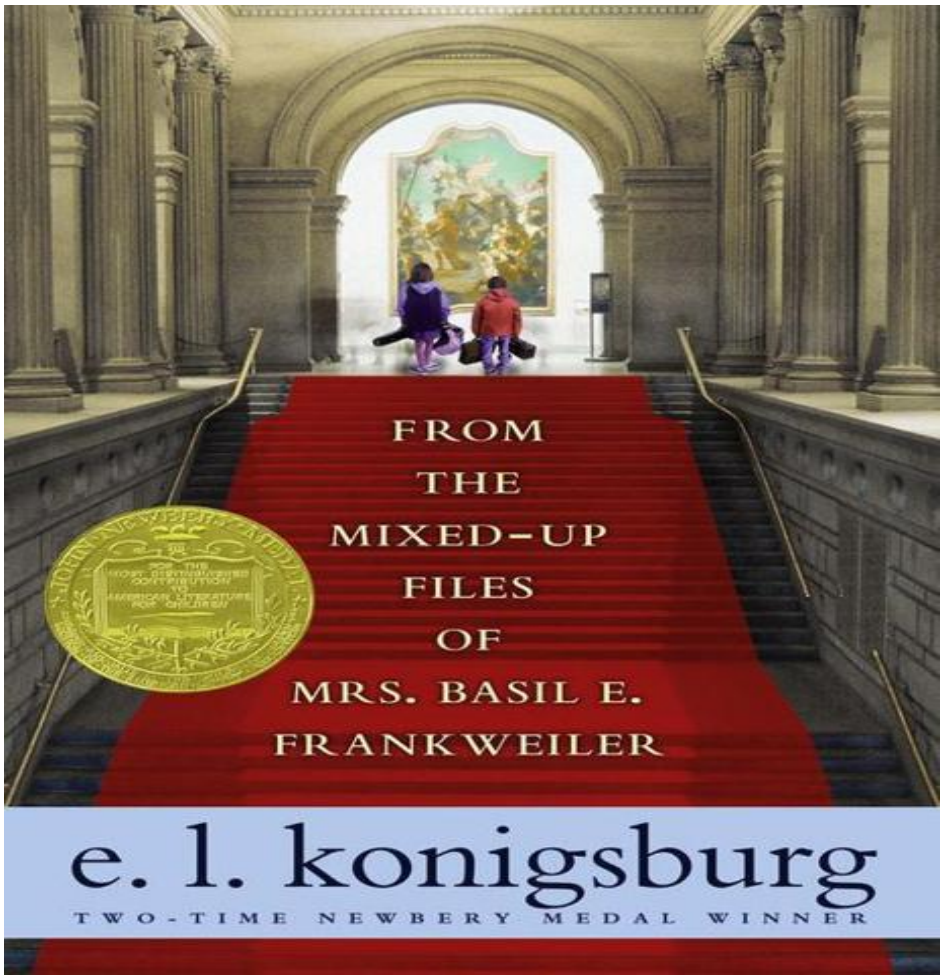


# FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER

e. l. konigsburg

TWO-TIME NEWBERY MEDAL WINNER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e.l. konigsburg

Aladdin Paperbacks
New York London Toronto Sydney

**Praise for *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler***

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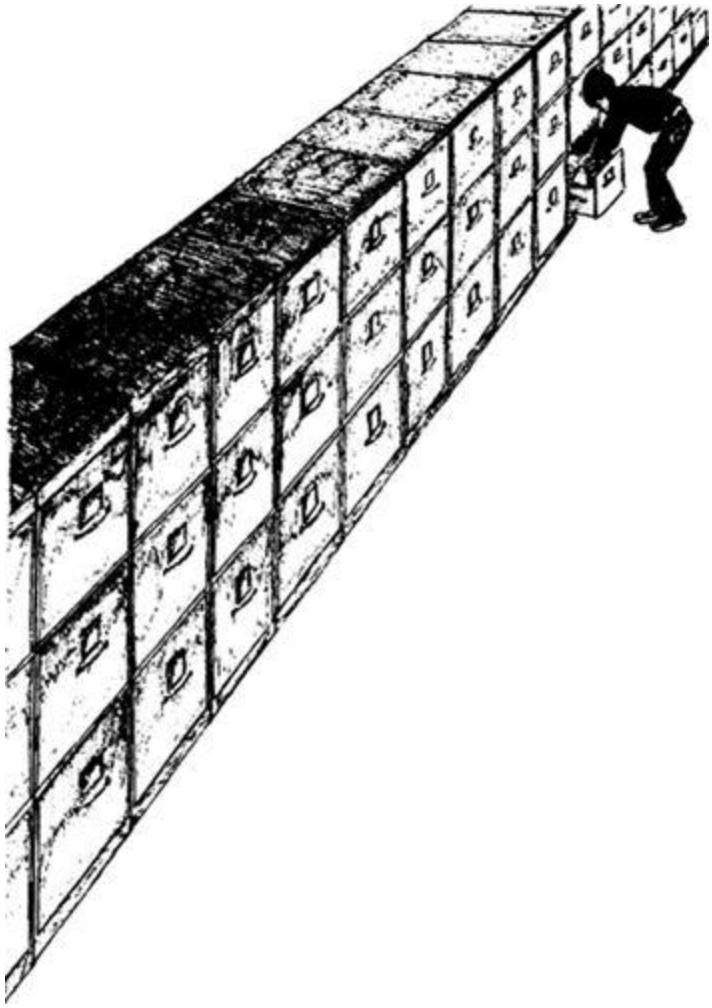

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E.L. Konigsburg

Aladdin Paperbacks
New York London Toronto Sydney

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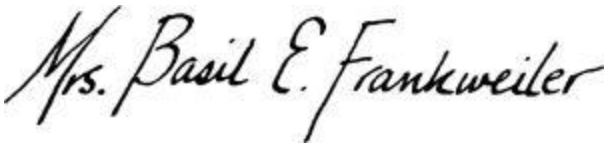
**To my**
**lawyer, Saxonberg:**

*To my lawyer, Saxonberg:*

*I cant say that I enjoyed your last visit. It was obvious that you had too much on your mind to pay any attention to what I was trying to say. Perhaps, if you had some interest in this world besides law, taxes, and your grandchildren, you could almost be a fascinating person. Almost. That last visit was the worst bore. I wont risk another dull visit for a while, so I'm having Sheldon, my chauffeur, deliver this account to your home. I've written it to explain certain changes I want made in my last will and testament. You'll understand those changes (and a lot of other things) much better after reading it. I'm sending you a carbon copy; I'll keep the original in my files. I don't come in until much later, but never mind. You'll find enough to interest you until I do.*

*You never knew that I could write this well, did you? Of course, you don't actually know yet, but you soon will. I've spent a lot of time on this file. I listened. I investigated, and I fitted all the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle. It leaves no doubts. Well, Saxonberg, read and discover.*



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# *1*

CLAUDIA KNEW THAT SHE COULD NEVER PULL OFF the old-fashioned kind of running away. That is, running away in the heat of anger with a knapsack on her back. She didn't like discomfort; even picnics were untidy and inconvenient: all those insects and the sun melting the icing on the cupcakes. Therefore, she decided that her leaving home would not be just running from somewhere but would be running to somewhere. To a large place, a comfortable place, an indoor place, and preferably a beautiful place. And that's why she decided upon the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

She planned very carefully; she saved her allowance and she chose her companion. She chose Jamie, the second youngest of her three younger brothers. He could be counted on to be quiet, and now and then he was good for a laugh. Besides, he was rich; unlike most boys his age, he had never even begun collecting baseball cards. He saved almost every penny he got.

But Claudia waited to tell Jamie that she had decided upon him. She couldn't count on him to be *that* quiet for *that* long. And she calculated needing *that* long to save her weekly allowances. It seemed senseless to run away without money. Living in the suburbs had taught her that everything costs.

She had to save enough for train fare and a few expenses before she could tell Jamie or make final plans. In the meantime she almost forgot why she was running away. But not entirely. Claudia knew that it had to do with injustice. She was the oldest child and the only girl and was subject to a lot of injustice. Perhaps it was because she had to both empty the dishwasher and set the table on the same night while her brothers got out of everything. And, perhaps, there was another reason more clear to me than to Claudia. A reason that had to do with the sameness of each and every week. She was bored with simply being straight-A's Claudia Kincaid. She was tired of

arguing about whose turn it was to choose the Sunday night seven-thirty television show, of injustice, and of the monotony of everything.

The fact that her allowance was so small that it took her more than three weeks of skipping hot fudge sundaes to save enough for train fare was another example of injustice. (Since you always drive to the city, Saxonberg, you probably don't know the cost of train fare. I'll tell you. Full fare one way costs one dollar and sixty cents. Claudia and Jamie could each travel for half of that since she was one month under twelve, and Jamie was well under twelve—being only nine.) Since she intended to return home after everyone had learned a lesson in Claudia appreciation, she had to save money for her return trip, too, which was like full fare one way. Claudia knew that hundreds of people who lived in her town worked in offices in New York City and could afford to pay full fare both ways every day. Like her father. After all, Greenwich was considered an actual suburb of New York, a commuting suburb.

Even though Claudia knew that New York City was not far away, certainly not far enough to go considering the size and number of the injustices done to her, she knew that it was a good place to get lost. Her mother's Mah-Jong club ladies called it *the city*. Most of them never ventured there; it was exhausting, and it made them nervous. When she was in the fourth grade, her class had gone on a trip to visit historical places in Manhattan. Johnathan Richter's mother hadn't let him go for fear he'd get separated from the group in all the jostling that goes on in New York. Mrs. Richter, who was something of a character, had said that she was certain that he would "come home lost." And she considered the air very bad for him to breathe.

Claudia loved the city because it was elegant; it was important; and busy. The best place in the world to hide. She studied maps and the Tourguide book of the American Automobile Association and reviewed every field trip her class had ever taken. She made a specialized geography course for herself. There were even some pamphlets about the museum around the house, which she quietly researched.

Claudia also decided that she must get accustomed to giving up things. Learning to do without hot fudge sundaes was good practice for her. She made do with the Good Humor bars her mother always kept in their freezer. Normally, Claudia's hot fudge expenses were forty cents per week. Before

her decision to run away, deciding what to do with the ten cents left over from her allowance had been the biggest adventure she had had each week. Sometimes she didn't even have ten cents, for she lost a nickel every time she broke one of the household rules like forgetting to make her bed in the morning. She was certain that her allowance was the smallest in her class. And most of the other sixth graders never lost part of their pay since they had full-time maids to do the chores instead of a cleaning lady only twice a week. Once after she had started saving, the drug store had a special. HOT FUDGE, 27¢, the sign in the window said. She bought one. It would postpone her running away only twenty-seven cents worth. Besides, once she made up her mind to go, she enjoyed the planning almost as much as she enjoyed spending money. Planning long and well was one of her special talents.

Jamie, the chosen brother, didn't even care for hot fudge sundaes although he could have bought one at least every other week. A year and a half before, Jamie had made a big purchase; he had spent his birthday money and part of his Christmas money on a transistor radio, made in Japan, purchased from Woolworth's. Occasionally, he bought a battery for it. They would probably need the radio; that made another good reason for choosing Jamie.

On Saturdays Claudia emptied the wastebaskets, a task she despised. There were so many of them. Everyone in her family had his own bedroom and waste-basket except her mother and father who shared both—with each other. Almost every Saturday Steve emptied his pencil sharpener into his. She knew he made his basket messy on purpose.

One Saturday as she was carrying the basket from her parents' room, she jiggled it a little so that the contents would sift down and not spill out as she walked. Their basket was always so full since there were two of them using it. She managed to shift a shallow layer of Kleenex, which her mother had used for blotting lipstick, and thus exposed the corner of a red ticket. Using the tips of her forefinger and thumb like a pair of forceps, she pulled at it and discovered a ten-ride pass for the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. Used train passes normally do not appear in suburban wastebaskets; they appear in the pockets of train conductors. Nine rides on a pass are marked off in little squares along the bottom edge, and they are punched one at a time as they are used; for the tenth ride the conductor

collects the pass. Their cleaning lady who had come on Friday must have thought that the pass was all used up since rides one through nine were already punched. The cleaning lady never went to New York, and Claudia's dad never kept close track of his pocket change or his train passes.

Both she and Jamie could travel on the leftover pass since two half fares equal one whole. Now they could board the train without having to purchase tickets. They would avoid the station master and any stupid questions he might ask. What a find! From a litter of lipstick kisses, Claudia had plucked a free ride. She regarded it as an invitation. They would leave on Wednesday.

On Monday afternoon Claudia told Jamie at the school bus stop that she wanted him to sit with her because she had something important to tell him. Usually, the four Kincaid children neither waited for each other nor walked together, except for Kevin, who was somebody's charge each week. School had begun on the Wednesday after Labor Day. Therefore, their "fiscal week" as Claudia chose to call it began always on Wednesday. Kevin was only six and in the first grade and was made much over by everyone, especially by Mrs. Kincaid, Claudia thought. Claudia also thought that he was terribly babied and impossibly spoiled. You would think that her parents would know something about raising children by the time Kevin, their fourth, came along. But her parents hadn't learned. She couldn't remember being anyone's charge when she was in the first grade. Her mother had simply met her at the bus stop every day.

Jamie wanted to sit with his buddy, Bruce. They played cards on the bus; each day meant a continuation of the day before. (The game was nothing very complicated, Saxonberg. Nothing terribly refined. They played *war*, that simple game where each player puts down a card, and the higher card takes both. If the cards are the same, there is a war which involves putting down more cards; winner then takes all the war cards.) Every night when Bruce got off at his stop, he'd take his stack of cards home with him. Jamie would do the same. They always took a vow not to shuffle. At the stop before Bruce's house, they would stop playing, wrap a rubber band around each pile, hold the stack under each other's chin and spit on each other's deck saying, "Thou shalt not shuffle." Then each tapped his deck and put it in his pocket.

Claudia found the whole procedure disgusting, so she suffered no feelings of guilt when she pulled Jamie away from his precious game. Jamie was mad, though. He was in no mood to listen to Claudia. He sat slumped in his seat with his lips pooched out and his eyebrows pulled down on top of his eyes. He looked like a miniature, clean-shaven Neanderthal man. Claudia didn't say anything. She waited for him to cool off.

Jamie spoke first, "Gosh, Claude, why don't you pick on Steve?"

Claudia answered, “I thought, Jamie, that you’d see that it’s obvious I don’t want Steve.”

“Well,” Jamie pleaded, “want him! Want him!”

Claudia had planned her speech. “I want you, Jamie, for the greatest adventure in our lives.”

Jamie muttered, “Well, I wouldn’t mind if you’d pick on someone else.”

Claudia looked out the window and didn’t answer. Jamie said, “As long as you’ve got me here, tell me.”

Claudia still said nothing and still looked out the window. Jamie became impatient. “I said that as long as you’ve got me here, you may as well tell me.”

Claudia remained silent. Jamie erupted, “What’s the matter with you, Claude? First you bust up my card game, then you don’t tell me. It’s undecent.”

“Break up, not bust up. Indecent, not undecent,” Claudia corrected.

“Oh, boloney! You know what I mean. Now tell me,” he demanded.

“I’ve picked you to accompany me on the greatest adventure of our mutual lives,” Claudia repeated.

“You said that.” He clenched his teeth. “Now tell me.”

“I’ve decided to run away from home, and I’ve chosen you to accompany me.”

“Why pick on me? Why not pick on Steve?” he asked.

Claudia sighed, “I don’t want Steve. Steve is one of the things in my life that I’m running away from. I want you.”

Despite himself, Jamie felt flattered. (Flattery is as important a machine as the lever, isn’t it, Saxon-berg? Give it a proper place to rest, and it can move the world.) It moved Jamie. He stopped thinking, “Why pick on me?” and started thinking, “I am chosen.” He sat up in his seat, unzipped his jacket, put one foot up on the seat, placed his hands over his bent knee and said out of the corner of his mouth, “O.K., Claude, when do we bust out of here? And how?”

Claudia stifled the urge to correct his grammar again. “On Wednesday. Here’s the plan. Listen carefully.”

Jamie squinted his eyes and said, “Make it complicated, Claude. I like complications.”

Claudia laughed. “It’s got to be simple to work. We’ll go on Wednesday because Wednesday is music lesson day. I’m taking my violin out of its case and am packing it full of clothes. You do the same with your trumpet case. Take as much clean underwear as possible and socks and at least one other shirt with you.”

“All in a trumpet case? I should have taken up the bass fiddle.”

“You can use some of the room in my case. Also use your book bag. Take your transistor radio.”

“Can I wear sneakers?” Jamie asked.

Claudia answered, “Of course. Wearing shoes all the time is one of the tyrannies you’ll escape by coming with me.”

Jamie smiled, and Claudia knew that now was the correct time to ask. She almost managed to sound casual. “And bring all your money.” She cleared her throat. “By the way, how much money do you have?”

Jamie put his foot back down on the floor, looked out the window and said, “Why do you want to know?”

“For goodness’ sake, Jamie, if we’re in this together, then we’re together. I’ve got to know. How much do you have?”

“Can I trust you not to talk?” he asked.

Claudia was getting mad. “Did I ask *you* if I could trust you not to talk?” She clamped her mouth shut and let out twin whiffs of air through her nostrils; had she done it any harder or any louder, it would have been called a snort.

“Well, you see, Claude,” Jamie whispered, “I have quite a lot of money.”

Claudia thought that old Jamie would end up being a business tycoon someday. Or at least a tax attorney like their grandfather. She said nothing to Jamie.

Jamie continued, “Claude, don’t tell Mom or Dad, but I gamble. I play those card games with Bruce for money. Every Friday we count our cards, and he pays me. Two cents for every card I have more than he has and five cents for every ace. And I always have more cards than he has and at least one more ace.”

Claudia lost all patience. “Tell me how much you have! Four dollars? Five? How much?”

Jamie nuzzled himself further into the corner of the bus seat and sang, “Twenty-four dollars and forty-three cents.” Claudia gasped, and Jamie,

enjoying her reaction, added, “Hang around until Friday and I’ll make it twenty-five even.”

“How can you do that? Your allowance is only twenty-five cents. Twenty-four forty-three plus twenty-five cents makes only twenty-four dollars and sixty-eight cents.” Details never escaped Claudia.

“I’ll win the rest from Bruce.”

“C’mon now, James, how can you know on Monday that you’ll win on Friday?”

“I just know that I will,” he answered.

“How do you know?”

“I’ll never tell.” He looked straight at Claudia to see her reaction. She looked puzzled. He smiled, and so did she, for she then felt more certain than ever that she had chosen the correct brother for a partner in escape. They complemented each other perfectly. She was cautious (about everything but money) and poor; he was adventurous (about everything but money) and rich. More than twenty-four dollars. That would be quite a nice boodle to put in their knapsacks if they were using knapsacks instead of instrument cases. She already had four dollars and eighteen cents. They would escape in comfort.

Jamie waited while she thought. “Well? What do you say? Want to wait until Friday?”

Claudia hesitated only a minute more before deciding. “No, we have to go on Wednesday. I’ll write you full details of my plan. You must show the plan to no one. Memorize all the details; then destroy my note.”

“Do I have to eat it?” Jamie asked.

“Tearing it up and putting it in the trash would be much simpler. No one in our family but me ever goes through the trash. And I only do if it is not sloppy and not full of pencil sharpener shavings. Or ashes.”

“I’ll eat it. I like complications,” Jamie said.

“You must also like wood pulp,” Claudia said. “That’s what paper is made of, you know.”

“I know. I know,” Jamie answered. They spoke no more until they got off the bus at their stop. Steve got off the bus after Jamie and Claudia.

Steve yelled, “Claude! Claude! It’s your turn to take Kevin. I’ll tell Mom if you forget.”

Claudia, who had been walking up ahead with Jamie, stopped short, ran back, grabbed Kevin's hand and started retracing her steps, pulling him along to the side and slightly behind.

"I wanna walk with Stevie," Kevin cried.

"That would be just fine with me, Kevin Brat," Claudia answered. "But today you happen to be my responsibility."

"Whose 'sponsibility am I next?" he asked.

"Wednesday starts Steve's turn," Claudia answered.

"I wish it could be Steve's turn every week," Kevin whined.

"You just may get your wish."

Kevin never realized then or ever that he had been given a clue, and he pouted all the way home.

# *2*

ON TUESDAY NIGHT JAMIE FOUND HIS LIST OF instructions under his pillow pinned to his pajamas. His first instruction was to forget his homework; get ready for the trip instead. I wholeheartedly admire Claudia's thoroughness. Her concern for delicate details is as well developed as mine. Her note to Jamie even included a suggestion for hiding his trumpet when he took it out of its case. He was to roll it up in his extra blanket, which was always placed at the foot of his bed.

After he had followed all the instructions on the list, Jamie took a big glass of water from the bathroom and sat cross-legged on the bed. He bit off a large corner of the list. The paper tasted like the bubble gum he had once saved and chewed for five days; it was just as tasteless and only slightly harder. Since the ink was not waterproof, it turned his teeth blue. He tried only one more bite before he tore up the note, crumpled the pieces, and threw them into the trash. Then he brushed his teeth.

The next morning Claudia and Jamie boarded the school bus as usual, according to plan. They sat together in the back and continued sitting there when they arrived at school and everyone got out of the bus. No one was supposed to notice this, and no one did. There was so much jostling and searching for homework papers and mittens that no one paid any attention to anything except personal possessions until they were well up the walk to school. Claudia had instructed Jamie to pull his feet up and crouch his head down so that Herbert, the driver, couldn't see him. He did, and she did the same. If they were spotted, the plan was to go to school and fake out their schedules as best they could, having neither books in their bags nor musical instruments in their cases.

They lay over their book bags and over the trumpet and violin cases. Each held his breath for a long time, and each resisted at least four temptations to peek up and see what was going on. Claudia pretended that she was blind and had to depend upon her senses of hearing, touch, and

smell. When they heard the last of the feet going down the steps and the motor start again, they lifted their chins slightly and smiled—at each other.

Herbert would now take the bus to the lot on the Boston Post Road where the school buses parked. Then he would get out of the bus and get into his car and go wherever else he always went. James and Claudia practiced silence all during the ragged ride to the parking lot. The bus bounced along like an empty cracker box on wheels—almost empty. Fortunately, the bumps made it noisy. Otherwise, Claudia would have worried for fear the driver could hear her heart, for it sounded to her like their electric percolator brewing the morning's coffee. She didn't like keeping her head down so long. Perspiration was causing her cheek to stick to the plastic seat; she was convinced that she would develop a medium-serious skin disease within five minutes after she got off the bus.

The bus came to a stop. They heard the door open. Just a few backward steps by Herbert, and they would be discovered. They held their breath until they heard him walk down the steps and out of the bus. Then they heard the door close. After he got out, Herbert reached in from the small side window to operate the lever that closed the door.

Claudia slowly pulled her arm in front of her and glanced at her watch. She would give Herbert seven minutes before she would lift her head. When the time was up, both of them knew that they could get up, but both wanted to see if they could hold out a little bit longer, and they did. They stayed crouched down for about forty-five more seconds, but being cramped and uncomfortable, it seemed like forty-five more minutes.

When they got up, both were grinning. They peeked out of the window of the bus, and saw that the coast was clear. There was no need to hurry so they slowly made their way up to the front, Claudia leading. The door lever was left of the driver's seat, and as she walked toward it, she heard an awful racket behind her.

"Jamie," she whispered, "what's all that racket?"

Jamie stopped, and so did the noise. "What racket?" he demanded.

"You," she said. "You are the racket. What in the world are you wearing? Chain mail?"

"I'm just wearing my usual. Starting from the bottom, I have B.V.D. briefs, size ten, one tee shirt . . ."

“Oh, for goodness’ sake, I know all that. What are you wearing that makes so much noise?”

“Twenty-four dollars and forty-three cents.”

Claudia saw then that his pockets were so heavy they were pulling his pants down. There was a gap of an inch and a half between the bottom hem of his shirt and the top of his pants. A line of winter white skin was punctuated by his navel.

“How come all your money is in change? It rattles.”

“Bruce pays off in pennies and nickels. What did you expect him to pay me in? Traveler’s checks?”

“O.K. O.K.,” Claudia said. “What’s that hanging from your belt?”

“My compass. Got it for my birthday last year.”

“Why did you bother bringing that? You’re carrying enough weight around already.”

“You need a compass to find your way in the woods. Out of the woods, too. Everyone uses a compass for that.”

“What woods?” Claudia asked.

“The woods we’ll be hiding out in,” Jamie answered.

“Hiding *out in?* What kind of language is that?”

“English language. That’s what kind.”

“Who ever told you that we were going to hide out in the woods?” Claudia demanded.

“There! You said it. You said it!” Jamie shrieked.

“Said what? I never said we’re going to hide out in the woods.” Now Claudia was yelling, too.

“No! you said *‘hide out in*.’”

“I did not!”

Jamie exploded. “You did, too. You said, ‘Who ever told you that we’re going to *hide out in* the woods?’ You said that.”

“O.K. O.K.,” Claudia replied. She was trying hard to remain calm, for she knew that a group leader must never lose control of herself, even if the group she leads consists of only herself and one brother brat.

“O.K.,’ she repeated. “I *may* have said hide *out in*, but I didn’t say *the woods.”*

“Yes, sir. You said, ‘Who ever told you that

Claudia didn't give him a chance to finish. "I know. I know. Now, let's begin by my saying that we are going to hide out in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City."

Jamie said, "See! See! you said it again."

"I did not! I said, 'The Metropolitan Museum of Art"

"You said *hide out in* again."

"All right. Let's forget the English language lessons. We are going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan."

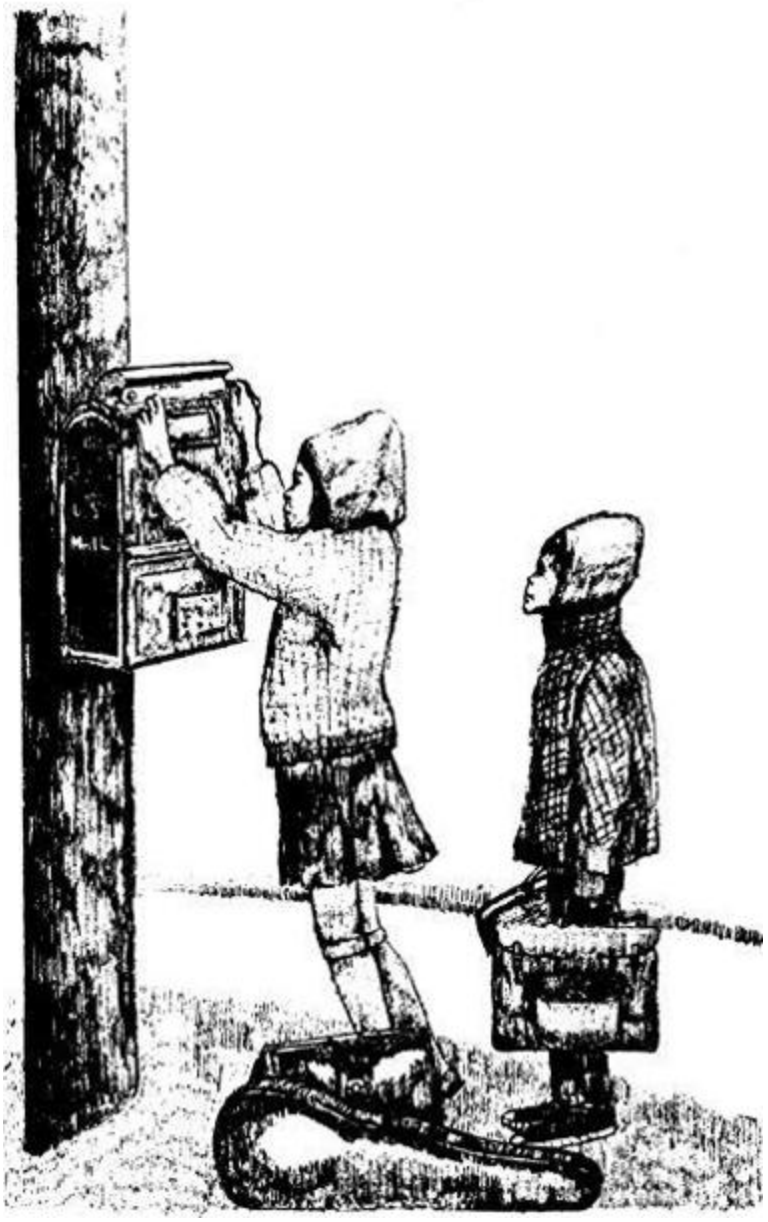
For the first time, the meaning instead of the grammar of what Claudia had said penetrated.

"The Metropolitan Museum of Art! Boloney!" he exclaimed. "What kind of crazy idea is that?"

Claudia now felt that she had control of herself and Jamie and the situation. For the past few minutes they had forgotten that they were stowaways on the school bus and had behaved as they always did at home. She said, "Let's get off this bus and on the train, and I'll tell you about it."

Once again James Kincaid felt cheated. "The train! Can't we even hitchhike to New York?"

"Hitchhike? And take a chance of getting kidnapped or robbed? Or we could even get mugged," Claudia replied.



“Robbed? Why are you worried about that? It’s mostly my money,” Jamie told her.

“We’re in this together. Its mostly your money we’re using, but it’s all my idea we’re using. We’ll take the train.”

“Of all the sissy ways to run away and of all the sissy places to run away to. . . .” Jamie mumbled.

He didn’t mumble quite softly enough. Claudia turned on him, “Run *away to?* How can you run *away* and *to?* What kind of language is that?” Claudia asked.

“The American language,” Jamie answered. “American James Kincaidian language.” And they both left the bus forgetting caution and remembering only their quarrel.

They were not discovered.

On the way to the train station Claudia mailed two letters.

“What were those?” Jamie asked.

“One was a note to Mom and Dad to tell them that we are leaving home and not to call the FBI. They’ll get it tomorrow or the day after.”

“And the other?”

“The other was two box tops from corn flakes. They send you twenty-five cents if you mail them two box tops with stars on the tops. For milk money, it said.”

“You should have sent that in before. We could use twenty-five cents more.”

“We just finished eating the second box of corn flakes this morning,” Claudia informed him.

They arrived at the Greenwich station in time to catch the 10:42 local. The train was not filled with either commuters or lady shoppers, so Claudia walked up the aisles of one car and then another until she found a pair of chairs that dissatisfied her the least with regard to the amount of dust and lint on the blue velvet mohair covers. Jamie spent seven of the twenty-eight-and-a-half railroad miles trying to convince his sister that they should try hiding in Central Park. Claudia appointed him treasurer; he would not only hold all the money, he would also keep track of it and pass judgment on all expenditures. Then Jamie began to feel that the Metropolitan offered several advantages and would provide adventure enough.

And in the course of those miles Claudia stopped regretting bringing Jamie along. In fact when they emerged from the train at Grand Central into the underworld of cement and steel that leads to the terminal, Claudia felt that having Jamie there was important. (Ah, how well I know those feelings of hot and hollow that come from that dimly lit concrete ramp.) And his money and radio were not the only reasons. Manhattan called for the courage of at least two Kincaids.

# *3*

AS SOON AS THEY REACHED THE SIDEWALK, JAMIE made his first decision as treasurer. "We'll walk from here to the museum."

"Walk?" Claudia asked. "Do you realize that it is over forty blocks from here?"

"Well, how much does the bus cost?"

"The bus!" Claudia exclaimed. "Who said anything about taking a bus? I want to take a taxi."

"Claudia," Jamie said, "you are quietly out of your mind. How can you even think of a taxi? We have no more allowance. No more income. You can't be extravagant any longer. It's not my money we're spending. It's *our* money. We're in this together, remember?"

"You're right," Claudia answered. "A taxi is expensive. The bus is cheaper. It's only twenty cents each. We'll take the bus."

"*Only* twenty cents each. That's forty cents total. No bus. We'll walk."

"We'll wear out forty cents worth of shoe leather," Claudia mumbled. "You're sure we have to walk?"

"Positive," Jamie answered. "Which way do we go?"

"Sure you won't change your mind?" The look on Jamie's face gave her the answer. She sighed. No wonder Jamie had more than twenty-four dollars; he was a gambler and a cheapskate. If that's the way he wants to be, she thought, I'll never again ask him for bus fare; I'll suffer and never, never let him know about it. But he'll regret it when I simply collapse from exhaustion. I'll collapse quietly.

"We'd better walk up Madison Avenue," she told her brother. "I'll see too many ways to spend *our* precious money if we walk on Fifth Avenue. All those gorgeous stores."

She and Jamie did not walk exactly side by side. Her violin case kept bumping him, and he began to walk a few steps ahead of her. As Claudia's pace slowed down from what she was sure was an accumulation of carbon

dioxide in her system (she had not yet learned about muscle fatigue in science class even though she was in the sixth grade honors class), Jamie's pace quickened. Soon he was walking a block and a half ahead of her. They would meet when a red light held him up. At one of these mutual stops Claudia instructed Jamie to wait for her on the corner of Madison Avenue and 80th Street, for there they would turn left to Fifth Avenue.

She found Jamie standing on that corner, probably one of the most civilized street corners in the whole world, consulting a compass and announcing that when they turned left, they would be heading "due northwest." Claudia was tired and cold at the tips; her fingers, her toes, her nose were all cold while the rest of her was perspiring under the weight of her winter clothes. She never liked feeling either very hot or very cold, and she hated feeling both at the same time. "Head due northwest. Head due northwest," she mimicked. "Can't you simply say turn right or turn left as everyone else does? Who do you think you are? Daniel Boone? I'll bet no one's used a compass in Manhattan since Henry Hudson."

Jamie didn't answer. He briskly rounded the corner of 80th Street and made his hand into a sun visor as he peered down the street. Claudia needed an argument. Her internal heat, the heat of anger, was cooking that accumulated carbon dioxide. It would soon explode out of her if she didn't give it some vent. "Don't you realize that we must try to be inconspicuous?" she demanded of her brother.

"What's inconspicuous?"

"Un-noticeable."

Jamie looked all around. "I think you're brilliant, Claude. New York is a great place to hide out. No one notices no one."

"Anyone," Claudia corrected. She looked at Jamie and found him smiling. She softened. She had to agree with her brother. She was brilliant. New York was a great place, and being called brilliant had cooled her down. The bubbles dissolved. By the time they reached the museum, she no longer needed an argument.

As they entered the main door on Fifth Avenue, the guard clicked off two numbers on his people counter. Guards always count the people going into the museum, but they don't count them going out. (My chauffeur, Sheldon, has a friend named Morris who is a guard at the Metropolitan. I've kept Sheldon busy getting information from Morris. It's not hard to do since

Morris loves to talk about his work. He'll tell about anything except security. Ask him a question he won't or can't answer, and he says, "I'm not at liberty to tell. Security.")

By the time Claudia and Jamie reached their destination, it was one o'clock, and the museum was busy. On any ordinary Wednesday over 26,000 people come. They spread out over the twenty acres of floor space; they roam from room to room to room to room to room. On Wednesday come the gentle old ladies who are using the time before the Broadway matinee begins. They walk around in pairs. You can tell they are a set because they wear matching pairs of orthopedic shoes, the kind that lace on the side. Tourists visit the museum on Wednesdays. You can tell them because the men carry cameras, and the women look as if their feet hurt; they wear high heeled shoes. (I always say that those who wear 'em deserve 'em.) And there are art students. Any day of the week. They also walk around in pairs. You can tell that they are a set because they carry matching black sketchbooks.

(You've missed all this, Saxonberg. Shame on you! You've never set your well-polished shoe inside that museum. More than a quarter of a million people come to that museum every week. They come from Mankato, Kansas where they have no museums and from Paris, France, where they have lots. And they all enter free of charge because that's what the museum is: great and large and wonderful and free to all. And complicated. Complicated enough even for Jamie Kincaid.)

No one thought it strange that a boy and a girl, each carrying a book bag and an instrument case and who would normally be in school, were visiting a museum. After all, about a thousand school children visit the museum every day. The guard at the entrance merely stopped them and told them to check their cases and book bags. A museum rule: no bags, food, or umbrellas. None that the guards can see. Rule or no rule, Claudia decided it was a good idea. A big sign in the checking room said NO TIPPING, so she knew that Jamie couldn't object. Jamie did object, however; he pulled his sister aside and asked her how she expected him to change into his pajamas. His pajamas, he explained, were rolled into a tiny ball in his trumpet case.

Claudia told him that she fully expected to check out at 4: 30. They would then leave the museum by the front door and within five minutes would re-enter from the back, through the door that leads from the parking

lot to the Children's Museum. After all, didn't that solve all their problems? (1) They would be seen leaving the museum. (2) They would be free of their baggage while they scouted around for a place to spend the night. And (3) it was free.

Claudia checked her coat as well as her packages. Jamie was condemned to walking around in his ski jacket. When the jacket was on and zippered, it covered up that exposed strip of skin. Besides, the orlon plush lining did a great deal to muffle his twenty-four-dollar rattle. Claudia would never have permitted herself to become so overheated, but Jamie liked perspiration, a little bit of dirt, and complications.

Right now, however, he wanted lunch. Claudia wished to eat in the restaurant on the main floor, but Jamie wished to eat in the snack bar downstairs; he thought it would be less glamorous, but cheaper, and as chancellor of the exchequer, as holder of the veto power, and as tightwad of the year, he got his wish. Claudia didn't really mind too much when she saw the snack bar. It was plain but clean.

James was dismayed at the prices. They had $28.61 when they went into the cafeteria, and only $27.11 when they came out still feeling hungry. "Claudia," he demanded, "did you know food would cost so much? Now, aren't you glad that we didn't take a bus?"

Claudia was no such thing. She was not glad that they hadn't taken a bus. She was merely furious that her parents, and Jamie's too, had been so stingy that she had been away from home for less than one whole day and was already worried about survival money. She chose not to answer Jamie. Jamie didn't notice; he was completely wrapped up in problems of finance.

"Do you think I could get one of the guards to play me a game of war?" he asked.

"That's ridiculous," Claudia said.

"Why? I brought my cards along. A whole deck."

Claudia said, "*Inconspicuous* is exactly the opposite of that. Even a guard at the Metropolitan who sees thousands of people every day would remember a boy who played him a game of cards."

Jamie's pride was involved. "I cheated Bruce through all second grade and through all third grade so far, and he still isn't wise."

"Jamie! Is that how you knew you'd win?"

Jamie bowed his head and answered, “Well, yeah. Besides, Brucie has trouble keeping straight the jacks, queens, and kings. He gets mixed up.”

“Why do you cheat your best friend?”

“I sure don’t know. I guess I like complications.”

“Well, quit worrying about money now. Worry about where we’re going to hide while they’re locking up this place.”

They took a map from the information stand for free. Claudia selected where they would hide during that dangerous time immediately after the museum was closed to the public and before all the guards and helpers left. She decided that she would go to the ladies’ room, and Jamie would go to the men’s room just before the museum closed. “Go to the one near the restaurant on the main floor,” she told Jamie.

“I’m not spending a night in a men’s room. All that tile. It’s cold. And, besides, men’s rooms make noises sound louder. And I rattle enough now.”

Claudia explained to Jamie that he was to enter a booth in the men’s room. “And then stand on it,” she continued.

“Stand on it? Stand on what?” Jamie demanded.

“You know,” Claudia insisted. “Stand on it!”

“You mean stand on the toilet?” Jamie needed everything spelled out.

“Well, what else would I mean? What else is there in a booth in the men’s room? And keep your head down. And keep the door to the booth very slightly open,” Claudia finished.

“Feet up. Head down. Door open. Why?”

“Because I’m certain that when they check the ladies’ room and the men’s room, they peek under the door and check only to see if there are feet. We must stay there until we’re sure all the people and guards have gone home.”

“How about the night watchman?” Jamie asked.

Claudia displayed a lot more confidence than she really felt. “Oh! there’ll be a night watchman, I’m sure. But he mostly walks around the roof trying to keep people from breaking in. We’ll already be in. They call what he walks, a cat walk. We’ll learn his habits soon enough. They must mostly use burglar alarms in the inside. We’ll just never touch a window, a door, or a valuable painting. Now, let’s find a place to spend the night.”

They wandered back to the rooms of fine French and English furniture. It was here Claudia knew for sure that she had chosen the most elegant place

in the world to hide. She wanted to sit on the lounge chair that had been made for Marie Antoinette or at least sit at her writing table. But signs everywhere said not to step on the platform. And some of the chairs had silken ropes strung across the arms to keep you from even trying to sit down. She would have to wait until after lights out to be Marie Antoinette.

At last she found a bed that she considered perfectly wonderful, and she told Jamie that they would spend the night there. The bed had a tall canopy, supported by an ornately carved headboard at one end and by two gigantic posts at the other. (I'm familiar with that bed, Saxonberg. It is as enormous and fussy as mine. And it dates from the sixteenth century like mine. I once considered donating my bed to the museum, but Mr. Untermyer gave them this one first. I was somewhat relieved when he did. Now I can enjoy my bed without feeling guilty because the museum doesn't have one. Besides, I'm not that fond of donating things.)

Claudia had always known that she was meant for such fine things. Jamie, on the other hand, thought that running away from home to sleep in just another bed was really no challenge at all. He, James, would rather sleep on the bathroom floor, after all. Claudia then pulled him around to the foot of the bed and told him to read what the card said.

Jamie read, “Please do not step on the platform.”

Claudia knew that he was being difficult on purpose; therefore, she read for him, “State bed—scene of the alleged murder of Amy Robsart, first wife of Lord Robert Dudley, later Earl of . . .”

Jamie couldn't control his smile. He said, "You know, Claude, for a sister and a fussbudget, you're not too bad."

Claudia replied, "You know, Jamie, for a brother and a cheapskate, you're not too bad."

Something happened at precisely that moment. Both Claudia and Jamie tried to explain to me about it, but they couldn't quite. I know what happened, though I never told them. Having words and explanations for everything is too modern. I especially wouldn't tell Claudia. She has too many explanations already.

What happened was: they became a team, a family of two. There had been times before they ran away when they had acted like a team, but those were very different from *feeling* like a team. Becoming a team didn't mean the end of their arguments. But it did mean that the arguments became a part of the adventure, became discussions not threats. To an outsider the arguments would appear to be the same because feeling like part of a team is something that happens invisibly. You might call it *caring*. You could even call it *love*. And it is very rarely, indeed, that it happens to two people at the same time—especially a brother and a sister who had always spent more time with activities than they had with each other.

They followed their plan: checked out of the museum and re-entered through a back door. When the guard at that entrance told them to check their instrument cases, Claudia told him that they were just passing through on their way to meet their mother. The guard let them go, knowing that if they went very far, some other guard would stop them again. However, they managed to avoid other guards for the remaining minutes until the bell rang. The bell meant that the museum was closing in five minutes. They then entered the booths of the rest rooms.

They waited in the booths until five-thirty, when they felt certain that everyone had gone. Then they came out and met. Five-thirty in winter is dark, but nowhere seems as dark as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The ceilings are so high that they fill up with a lot of darkness. It seemed to Jamie and Claudia that they walked through miles of corridors. Fortunately, the corridors were wide, and they were spared bumping into things.

At last they came to the hall of the English Renaissance. Jamie quickly threw himself upon the bed forgetting that it was only about six o'clock and thinking that he would be so exhausted that he would immediately fall

asleep. He didn't. He was hungry. That was one reason he didn't fall asleep immediately. He was uncomfortable, too. So he got up from bed, changed into his pajamas and got back into bed. He felt a little better. Claudia had already changed into her pajamas. She, too, was hungry, and she, too, was uncomfortable. How could so elegant and romantic a bed smell so musty? She would have liked to wash everything in a good, strong, sweet-smelling detergent.

As Jamie got into bed, he still felt uneasy, and it wasn't because he was worried about being caught. Claudia had planned everything so well that he didn't concern himself about that. The strange way he felt had little to do with the strange place in which they were sleeping. Claudia felt it, too. Jamie lay there thinking. Finally, realization came.

"You know, Claude," he whispered, "I didn't brush my teeth."

Claudia answered, "Well, Jamie, you can't always brush after every meal." They both laughed very quietly. "Tomorrow," Claudia reassured him, "we'll be even better organized."

It was much earlier than her bedtime at home, but still Claudia felt tired. She thought she might have an iron deficiency anemia: tired blood. Perhaps, the pressures of everyday stress and strain had gotten her down. Maybe she was light-headed from hunger; her brain cells were being robbed of vitally needed oxygen for good growth and, and . . . yawn.

She shouldn't have worried. It had been an unusually busy day. A busy and unusual day. So she lay there in the great quiet of the museum next to the warm quiet of her brother and allowed the soft stillness to settle around them: a comforter of quiet. The silence seeped from their heads to their soles and into their souls. They stretched out and relaxed. Instead of oxygen and stress, Claudia thought now of hushed and quiet words: glide, fur, banana, peace. Even the footsteps of the night watchman added only an accented quarter-note to the silence that had become a hum, a lullaby.

They lay perfectly still even long after he passed. Then they whispered good night to each other and fell asleep. They were quiet sleepers and hidden by the heaviness of the dark, they were easily not discovered.

(Of course, Saxonberg, the draperies of that bed helped, too.)

# *4*

CLAUDIA AND JAMIE AWOKE VERY EARLY THE NEXT morning. It was still dark. Their stomachs felt like tubes of toothpaste that had been all squeezed out. Giant economy-sized tubes. They had to be out of bed and out of sight before the museum staff came on duty. Neither was accustomed to getting up so early, to feeling so unwashed, or feeling so hungry.

They dressed in silence. Each felt that peculiar chill that comes from getting up in the early morning. The chill that must come from one's own blood-stream, for it comes in summer as well as winter, from some inside part of you that knows it is early morning. Claudia always dreaded that brief moment when her pajamas were shed and her underwear was not yet on. Even before she began undressing, she always had her underwear laid out on the bed in the right direction, right for getting into as quickly as possible. She did this now, too. But she hurried less pulling her petticoat down over her head. She took good long whiffs of the wonderful essence of detergent and clean dacron-cotton which floated down with the petticoat. Next to any kind of elegance, Claudia loved good clean smells.

After they were dressed, Claudia whispered to Jamie, "Let's stash our book bags and instrument cases before we man our stations."

They agreed to scatter their belongings. Thus, if the museum officials found one thing, they wouldn't necessarily find all. While still at home they had removed all identification on their cases as well as their clothing. Any child who has watched only one month's worth of television knows to do that much.

Claudia hid her violin case in a sarcophagus that had no lid. It was well above eye level, and Jamie helped hoist her up so that she could reach it. It was a beautifully carved Roman marble sarcophagus. She hid her book bag behind a tapestry screen in the rooms of French furniture. Jamie wanted to hide his things in a mummy case, but Claudia said that that would be unnecessarily complicated. The Egyptian wing of the Metropolitan was too

far away from their bedroom; for the number of risks involved, it might as well be in Egypt. So the trumpet case was hidden inside a huge urn and Jamie's book bag was neatly tucked behind a drape that was behind a statue from the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, the museum people had fastened all the drawers of their furniture so that they couldn't be opened. They had never given a thought to the convenience of Jamie Kincaid.

"Manning their stations" meant climbing back into the booths and waiting during the perilous time when the museum was open to the staff but not to visitors. They washed up, combed their hair, and even brushed their teeth. Then began those long moments. That first morning they weren't quite sure when the staff would arrive, so they hid good and early. While Claudia stood crouched down waiting, the emptiness and the hollowness of all the museum corridors filled her stomach. She was starved. She spent her time trying not to remember delicious things to eat.

Jamie made one slight error that morning. It was almost enough to be caught. When he heard the sound of running water, he assumed that some male visitor was using the men's room to wash up. He checked his watch and saw that it was five past ten; he knew that the museum officially opened at ten o'clock, so he stepped down to walk out of his booth. It was not, however, a museum visitor who had turned on the water tap. It was a janitor filling his bucket. He was leaning down in the act of wringing out his mop when he saw Jamie's legs appear from nowhere and then saw Jamie emerge.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

Jamie smiled and nodded. "Mother always says that I came from Heaven." He bowed politely and walked out, delighted with his brush with danger. He could hardly wait to tell Claudia. Claudia chose not to be amused on so empty a stomach.

The museum restaurant wouldn't open until eleven thirty and the snack bar wouldn't open until after that, so they left the museum to get breakfast. They went to the automat and used up a dollar's worth of Bruce's nickels. Jamie allotted ten nickels to Claudia and kept ten for himself. Jamie bought a cheese sandwich and coffee. After eating these he still felt hungry and told Claudia she could have twenty-five cents more for pie if she wished. Claudia, who had eaten cereal and drunk pineapple juice, scolded him about the need to eat properly. Breakfast food for breakfast, and lunch food for

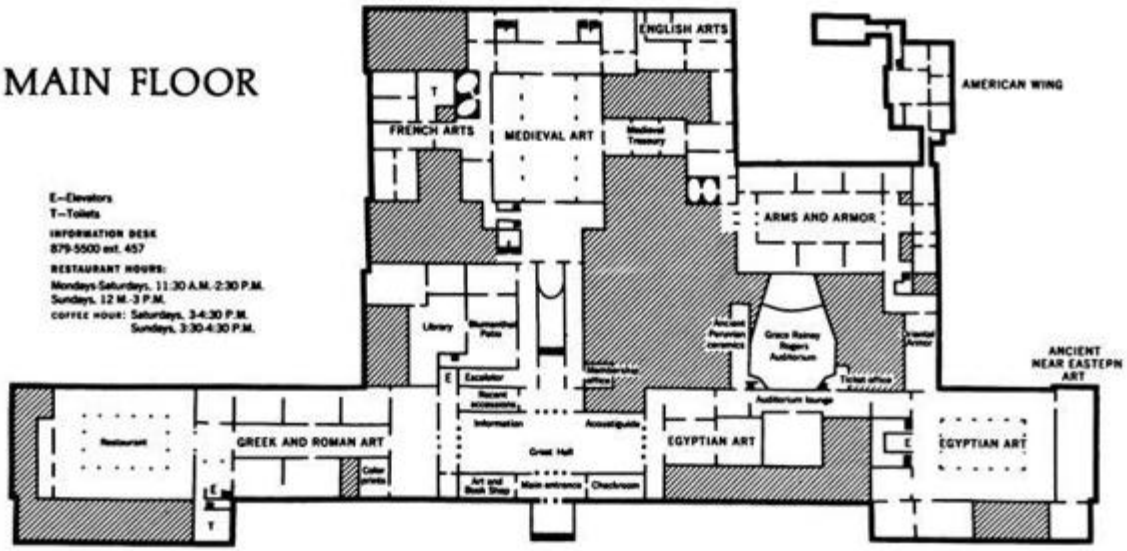
lunch. Jamie countered with complaints about Claudia's narrow-mindedness.

They were better organized that second day. Knowing that they could not afford more than two meals a day, they stopped at a grocery and bought small packages of peanut butter crackers for the night; they hid them in various pockets in their clothing. They decided to join a school group for lunch at the snack bar. There were certainly enough to choose from. That way their faces would always be just part of the crowd.

Upon their return to the museum, Claudia informed Jamie that they should take advantage of the wonderful opportunity they had to learn and to study. No other children in all the world since the world began had had such an opportunity. So she set forth for herself and for her brother the task of learning everything about the museum. One thing at a time. (Claudia probably didn't realize that the museum has over 365,000 works of art. Even if she had, she could not have been convinced that learning everything about everything was not possible; her ambitions were as enormous and as multi-directional as the museum itself.) Every day they would pick a different gallery about which they would learn everything. He could pick first. She would pick second; he, third; and so on. Just like the television schedule at home. Jamie considered learning something every day outrageous. It was not only outrageous; it was unnecessary. Claudia simply did not know how to escape. He thought he would put a quick end to this part of their runaway career. He chose the galleries of the Italian Renaissance. He didn't even know what the Renaissance was except that it sounded important and there seemed to be an awful lot of it. He figured that Claudia would soon give up in despair.

When she gave Jamie first pick, Claudia had been certain that he would choose Arms and Armor. She herself found these interesting. There was probably two days' worth of learning there. Perhaps, she might even choose the same on the second day.

# MAIN FLOOR

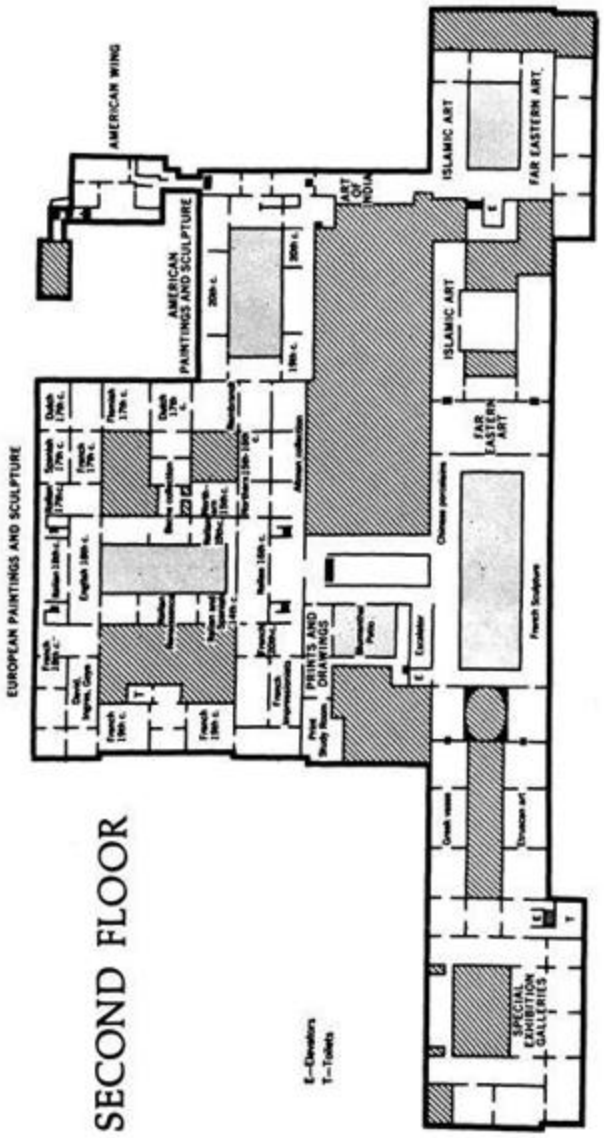



E—Elevators
T—Toilets

**INFORMATION DESK**
879-5500 ext. 457

**RESTAURANT HOURS:**
Mondays-Saturdays, 11:30 A.M.-2:30 P.M.
Sundays, 12 M.-3 P.M.

**COFFEE HOUR:** Saturdays, 3-4:30 P.M.
Sundays, 3:30-4:30 P.M.




Claudia was surprised at Jamie's choice. But she thought she knew why he chose the Italian Renaissance. She thought she knew because along with tennis, ballet, and diving lessons at the "Y", she had taken art appreciation lessons last year. Her art teacher had said that the Renaissance was a period of glorification of the human form; as best she could figure out, that meant bare bodies. Many painters of the Italian Renaissance had painted huge billowy, bosomy naked ladies. She was amazed at Jamie; she thought he was too young for that. He was. She never even considered the possibility that he wanted her to be bored. She had given him first choice, and she was

stuck with it. So she marched with him toward the long wide stairway straight in from the main entrance, which leads directly to the Hall of the Italian Renaissance.

If you think of doing something in New York City, you can be certain that at least two thousand other people have that same thought. And of the two thousand who do, about one thousand will be standing in line waiting to do it. That day was no exception. There were at least a thousand people waiting in line to see things in the Hall of the Italian Renaissance.

Claudia and Jamie did not think that there was anything unusual about the size of the crowd. This was New York. *Crowded* was part of the definition of New York. (To many art experts, Saxonberg, *crowded* is part of the definition of the Italian Renaissance, too. It was a time much like this: artistic activity was everywhere. Keeping track of the artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy is as difficult as keeping track of the tax laws in the nineteen fifties and sixties in the United States. And almost as complicated.)

As they reached the top of the stairs, a guard said, "Line forms to the right. Single file, please." They did as they were told, partly because they didn't want to offend any guard or even attract his attention and partly because the crowd made them. Ladies' arms draped with pocketbooks and men's arms draped with coats formed a barrier as difficult to get through as barbed wire. Claudia and Jamie stood in the manner of all children who are standing in line. They stood leaning back with their necks stretched and their heads tilted away, way back, making a vain effort to see over the shoulders of the tall adult who always appears in front of them. Jamie could see nothing but the coat of the man in front of him. Claudia could see nothing but a piece of Jamie's head plus the coat of the man in front of Jamie.

They realized that they were approaching something out of the ordinary when they saw a newspaper cameraman walking along the edge of the crowd. The newsman carried a large, black, flash camera which had *TIMES* stencilled in white on its case. Jamie tried to slow down to the pace of the photographer. He didn't know what he was having his picture taken for, but he liked getting his picture taken—especially for a newspaper. Once when his class had visited the fire department, his picture had been in the paper at home. He had bought seven copies of the paper and used that page for

bookcovers. When the bookcovers began to tear, he covered the covers with Saran wrap. They were still in his bookcase at home.

Claudia sensed danger. At least *she* remembered that they had run away from home, and she didn't want any New York paper advertising her whereabouts. Or Jamie's either. Especially if her parents happened to be looking for her. Someone in Greenwich was bound to read the *New York Times* and tell her folks. It would be more than a clue; it would be like booking anyone looking for them on a chartered bus ride straight to the hideaway. Wouldn't her brother ever learn inconspicuous? She shoved him.

He almost fell into the man in the coat. Jamie turned to Claudia and gave her an awful look. Claudia paid no attention, for now they reached what everyone was standing in line to see. A statue of an angel; her arms were folded, and she was looking holy. As Claudia passed by, she thought that that angel was the most beautiful, most graceful little statue she had ever seen; she wanted to stop and stare; she almost did, but the crowd wouldn't let her. As Jamie passed by, he thought that he would get even with Claudia for shoving him.

They followed the line to the end of the Renaissance Hall. When the velvet ropes that had guided the crowd by creating a narrow street within the room ended, they found themselves going down a staircase to the main floor. Claudia was lost in remembrance of the beautiful angel she had seen. Why did she seem so important; and why was she so special? Of course, she was beautiful. Graceful. Polished. But so were many other things at the museum. Her sarcophagus, for example, the one in which her violin case was hidden. And why was there all that commotion about her? The man had come to take pictures. There would be something about it in tomorrow's paper. They could find out from the newspapers.

She spoke to Jamie, "We'll have to buy a *New York Times* tomorrow to see the picture."

Jamie was still mad about that shove. Why would he want to buy the paper? He wouldn't be in the picture. He chose to fight Claudia with the one weapon he had—the power of the purse. He answered, "We can't afford a *New York Times*. It costs a dime."

"We've got to get one, Jamie. Don't you want to know what's so important about that statue? Why everyone is standing in line to see it?"

Jamie felt that letting Claudia know that she couldn't get away with shoving him in public was more important than his curiosity. "Well, perhaps, tomorrow you can push someone down and grab his paper while he's trying to get up. I'm afraid, though, that our budget won't allow this expense."

They walked for a short while before Claudia said, "I'll find out some way." She was determined about that.

She was also determined about learning; they wouldn't skip a lesson so easily. "Since we can't learn everything about the Italian Renaissance today, let's learn everything about the Egyptian rooms. That will be our lesson instead."

Jamie liked the mummies even if he didn't like lessons, so they walked together to the Egyptian wing. There they encountered a class that was also touring the halls. Each child in the class wore a round circle of blue construction paper on which was written in magic marker: Gr. 6, W.P.S. The class was seated on little rubber mats around a glass case within which was a mummy case within which was the mummy they were talking about. The teacher sat on a folding stool. Both Claudia and Jamie wandered over toward the class and soon became part of it—almost. They listened to the guide, a very pretty young lady who worked for the museum, and they learned a lot. They didn't even mind. They were surprised that they could actually learn something when they weren't in class. The guide told them how mummies were prepared and how Egypt's dry climate helped to preserve them. She told them about digging for tombs, and she told them about the beautiful princess Sit Hat-Hor Yunet whose jewelry they would see in another room. Before they left this room, however, she wanted to know if there were any questions. Since I'm sure this group was typical of all the school groups that I've observed at the museum, I can tell you what they were doing. At least twelve members of Gr. 6, W.P.S. were busy poking at each other. Twelve were wondering when they would eat; four were worried about how long it would be before they could get a drink of water.

Only Jamie had a question: "How much did it cost to become a mummy?"

The pretty guide thought he was part of the class; the teacher thought that he was planted in the audience to pep up the discussion; the class knew that

he was an imposter. When they bothered to notice Claudia, they knew that she was one, also. But the class had the good manners that come with not caring; they would leave the imposters alone. The question, however, would have caused at least ten of them to stop poking at each other; six to forget about eating and three others to find the need for drink suddenly less urgent. It caused Claudia to want to embalm Jamie in a vat of mummy fluid right that minute. That would teach him *inconspicuous*.

The guide told Jamie that some people saved all their lives so that they could become mummies; it was indeed expensive.

One of the students called out, "You might even say it costs him his life."

Everyone laughed. Then they picked up their rubber mats and walked to the next room. Claudia was ready to pull Jamie out of line and make him learn another part of the museum today, but she got a glimpse of the room they were to go to next. It was filled with jewelry: case after case of it. So they followed the class into that hall. After a short talk there, the guide bid them good-bye and mentioned that they might enjoy buying some of the museum pamphlets on Egypt. Jamie asked if *they* were expensive.

The guide answered, "Some are as inexpensive as a copy of the Sunday *New York Times*. Others cost much more."

Jamie looked over at Claudia; he shouldn't have. Claudia looked as satisfied as the bronze statue of the Egyptian cat she was standing near. The only real difference between them was that the cat wore tiny golden earrings and looked a trifle less smug.

They got the *New York Times* the next day. Neither Claudia nor Jamie bought it. The man who left it on the counter while he was looking at the reproductions of antique jewelry bought it. The Kincaids stole it from him. They left the museum immediately thereafter.

Claudia read the paper while they ate breakfast at Horn and Hardart's. That morning she didn't eat breakfast food for breakfast. Crackers and roasted chestnuts in bed at night satisfied only a small corner of her hunger. Being hungry was the most inconvenient part of running away. She meant to eat heartily for every cent Jamie gave her. She bought macaroni and cheese casserole, baked beans, and coffee that morning. Jamie got the same.

The information they wanted was on the first page of the second section of the *Times*. The headline said: RECORD CROWD VIEWS MUSEUM "BARGAIN." There were three pictures: one of the record crowd standing in line; one of the statue itself; and one of the director of the museum with an assistant. The article was as follows: (Saxonberg you can find an original of the newspaper in my files. It's in one of the seventeen cabinets that line the north wall of my office.)

Officials of the Metropolitan Museum of Art report that 100,000 people climbed the great stairway to catch a glimpse of one of its newest acquisitions, a twenty-four-inch statue called “Angel.” Interest in the marble piece arises from the unusual circumstances attending its acquisition by the museum and from the belief that it may be the work of the Italian Renaissance master, Michelangelo. If proof is found that it is an early work of Michelangelo, the museum will have purchased the greatest bargain in art history; it was purchased at an auction last year for $225.00. Considering that recently Prince Franz Josef II accepted an offer of $5 million for a small painting by Leonardo da Vinci, an artist of the same period and of similar merit, will give some idea of how great a bargain this is.

The museum purchased the statue last year when one of its curators spotted it during a preview showing of works to be auctioned by the Parke-Bernet Galleries. His initial suspicion that it might be the work of Michelangelo was confirmed by several other museum officials, all of whom kept their thoughts quiet in a successful effort to keep the bidding from being driven higher. The statue has been the subject of exhaustive tests and study by the museum staff as well as art experts from abroad. Most believe it to have been done about 470 years ago when Michelangelo was in his early twenties.

The statue was acquired by the Parke-Bernet Galleries from the collection of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. She claims to have purchased it from a dealer in Bologna, Italy before World War II. Mrs. Frankweiler’s residence on East 63rd Street was long a Manhattan showplace for what many considered one of the finest private collections of art in the Western Hemisphere. Others considered it a gigantic hodgepodge of the great and the mediocre. Mrs. Frankweiler closed her Manhattan residence three years ago; important pieces from its contents have found their way to various auctions and galleries since that time.

Mr. Frankweiler amassed a fortune from the corn oil industry and from developing many corn products. He died in 1947. Mrs. Frankweiler now lives on her country estate in Farmington, Connecticut. Her home, which at one time was open to the greats in the worlds of art, business, and politics, is now closed to all but her

staff, her advisors, and a few close friends. The Frankweilers had no children.

A museum spokesman said yesterday, "Whether or not conclusive proof will be found that this was the work of Michelangelo, we are pleased with our purchase." Although Michelangelo Buonarroti is perhaps best known for his paintings of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, he always considered himself a sculptor, and primarily a sculptor of marble. The question of whether the museum has acquired one of his lesser known masterpieces still awaits a final answer."

If Claudia's interests had been a little broader, if she had started with the national news on page one and had then read the continuations on page twenty-eight, she might have noticed a small article on that page, one column wide, that would have interested her. The date line was Greenwich, Connecticut, and it stated that two children of Mr. and Mrs. Steven C. Kincaid, Sr. had been missing since Wednesday. The article didn't mention any clues like Claudia's letter. It said that the children were last seen wearing nylon quilted ski jackets. Small help. Fourteen out of fifteen kids in the U.S.A. wear those. It went on to describe Claudia as brunette and pretty and Jamie as brunette and brown eyed. Police in the neighboring towns of Darien and Stamford in Connecticut and Port Chester, New York, had been alerted. (You see, Saxonberg, Claudia had found the article about the statue too easily. She didn't even look at the first section of the paper. I keep telling you that often the search proves more profitable than the goal. Keep that in mind when you're looking for something in my files.)

Claudia and Jamie read about the statue with great interest. Claudia read the article twice so that she could memorize it all. She decided that the statue was not only the most beautiful in the world but also the most mysterious.

Jamie said, "I don't think $225 is cheap. I've never had that much money in my whole life. Totaling up all my birthday and Christmas presents since I was born nine long years ago wouldn't make $225.

Claudia said, "You wouldn't consider two and a quarter cents very much, would you?"

Jamie answered, "I might."

"That's right. *You* might, but most people wouldn't. Well, if this statue is by Michelangelo, it's worth about $2,250,000 instead of $225. That's the same as saying that suddenly two and a quarter cents is worth $225."

Jamie thought this over a minute. He was impressed. "When I grow up, I'm going to find a way to know for certain who did a statue."

This was all Claudia needed. Something that had been smoldering inside her since she first saw the statue, that had been fed by the *Times* article, now flared into an idea.

"Jamie, let's do it now. Let's skip learning everything about everything in the museum. Let's concentrate on the statue."

"Can we still take class tours as we did yesterday?"

Claudia answered, "Of course. We don't have to skip learning *something* about everything. We just won't learn everything about everything. We'll concentrate on Michelangelo."

Jamie snapped his fingers. "I've got it!" he exclaimed. He held up his hands for Claudia to see.

"What does that mean?"

"Fingerprints, silly. If Michelangelo worked on that statue, his fingerprints would be on it."

"Fingerprints? Almost five-hundred-year-old fingerprints? How would you know that they belonged to Michelangelo? He didn't have a police record. I don't suppose he did. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure people were fingerprinted in those days even if they did."

"But what if we were to find identical fingerprints on something they knew that he did? We could compare them."

Claudia kept looking at the picture of the statue as she finished eating her baked beans.

"Jamie," she said, "do you think the statue looks like anyone special?" She folded her arms and gazed into the distance.

"No one I know looks like an angel."

"Think a minute." She cleared her throat and lifted her chin slightly and gazed into the distance. "Don't think about the hair style or the clothes or anything. Just think about the face." She nudged the page of the *New York Times* closer under Jamie's nose and resumed her pose. Jamie looked at the picture.

"Nope," he said looking up.

“Can’t you see any resemblance?”

“Nope.” He looked at the picture again. “Who do you think it looks like?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” she stammered.

Jamie noticed Claudia blushing. “What’s the matter? You getting a fever?”

“Don’t be silly. I just feel that the statue looks like someone in our family.”

“You sure you don’t have a fever? You’re talking out of your head.”

Claudia unfolded her arms and lowered her distant gaze. “I wonder who posed for it,” she said half aloud.

“Probably some fat old lady. Then the chisel slipped, so he made a skinny angel instead.

“Jamie, you have as much romance in you as the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood.”

“Romance! Boloney! But I do like the mystery part.”

“So do I!” Claudia answered. “But I like more than that about Angel.”

“We going to look for fingerprints then?”

Claudia reconsidered, “Well, we might look for fingerprints. That’s one way. For a start.” She looked at Jamie and sniffed, “But I’m sure it won’t work. We’ll look tomorrow. Even though it won’t work.” And she looked some more at the picture.

On the second day the crowd going up the broad staircase to see the little Angel was even greater. The newspaper article had made people curious. Besides, it was a cloudy day, and museum attendance always improves in bad weather. Some people who had not been to the Metropolitan Museum for years came. Some people who had never been there ever, came; they got directions from maps, subway conductors, and police. (I’m surprised, Saxonberg, that seeing my name in the paper in connection with Michelangelo didn’t bring even you to the museum. You would have profited more than you would have thought by that trip. Are photo albums of your grandchildren the only pictures you look at? Are you altogether unconscious of the magic of the name of Michelangelo? I truly believe that his name has magic even now; the best kind of magic because it comes

from true greatness. Claudia sensed it as she again stood in line. The mystery only intrigued her; the magic trapped her.)

Both children were annoyed when the guards plus the push of the crowd hurried them past the Angel. How could they possibly look for fingerprints when they were so rushed? After this hurried visit to the statue, they decided to do their research when they had the statue and the museum to themselves. Claudia especially wanted to make herself important to the statue. She would solve its mystery; and it, in turn, would do something important to her, though what this was, she didn't quite know.

As they once again reached the back stairs, Claudia asked Jamie, "With whom shall we dine today, Sir James?"

Jamie answered, "Oh, I don't know, dear Lady Claudia. Shall we find a good and proper group?"

"Yes, let us, Sir James."

Thereupon, Jamie held out his arm, Claudia rested the tips of her fingers on the top of his hand, and they descended the stairs. They proved to be as fussy in their selection as Goldilocks. This group was too old; that group, too young; this, too small; that, all girls. But they found a good and proper group in the American wing where they spent a lovely and informative hour and a half learning about the arts and crafts of colonial days. They dined with the group, staying always at the rear of the line, always slightly apart. Both Jamie and Claudia had acquired a talent for being near but never part of a group. (Some people, Saxonberg, never learn to do that all their lives, and some learn it all too well.)

# *5*

THEY HAD BEEN GONE FROM HOME FOR THREE DAYS now. Claudia insisted on a fresh change of underwear every day. That was the way she had been brought up. She insisted for Jamie, too. No question about it; their laundry was becoming a problem. They had to get to a laundromat. That night they removed all their dirty clothes from their instrument cases and stuffed those that would fit into various pockets. Those that didn't fit, they wore. A double layer of clothes never hurts anyone in winter, as long as the clean ones are worn closest to the skin.

Saturday seemed a good day for housekeeping chores. There would be no school groups for them to join. Claudia suggested that they eat both meals outside the museum. Jamie agreed. Claudia next suggested a real sit-down restaurant with tablecloths on the tables and waiters to serve you. Jamie said "NO" with such force that Claudia didn't try to persuade him.

From breakfast at the automat they went to laundry at the laundromat. They emptied their pockets of underwear and removed the layer of soiled socks. No one stared. Someone before them had probably done the same thing some time that week. They bought soap from a machine for ten cents and deposited a quarter into the slot in the washer. Through the glass in the door they watched their assorted clothing spill and splash over and over and around and around. Drying cost ten cents for ten minutes, but it took twenty cents worth of minutes to dry everything. When all was done, they were disappointed; all of it looked dismally gray. Very unelegant. Claudia had thought that their white underwear should not have been washed with the red and navy blue socks, but she would not have considered asking for more money for anything as unglamorous as dirty socks.

"Oh, well," she moaned, "at least they smell clean."

Jamie said, "Let's go to the TV department of Bloomingdale's and watch TV."

“Not today. We’ve got to work on the mystery of the statue all morning tomorrow, because tomorrow the museum doesn’t open until one o’clock. Today we must learn all about the Renaissance and Michelangelo to prepare ourselves. We’ll do research at the big library at 42nd Street.”

“How about the TV department of Macy’s instead?”

“To the library, Sir James.”

“Gimbels?”

“Library.”

They packed their gray-looking laundry back into their pockets and walked to the door of the laundromat. At the door Claudia turned to Jamie and asked, “Can we . . .?”

Jamie didn’t let her finish, “No, dear Lady Claudia. We have not the funds for taxis, buses, or subways. “Shall we walk?” He extended his arm. Claudia placed her gloved fingertips on top of Jamie’s mittened ones. Thus they began their long walk to the library.

Once there, they asked the lady at the information booth where they could find books on Michelangelo. She directed them first to the children’s room, but when the librarian there found out what they wanted to know, she advised them to go to the Don-nell Branch Library on Fifty-third Street. Jamie hoped this would discourage Claudia, but it didn’t. She didn’t even seem to mind back-tracking up Fifth Avenue. Her determination convinced Jamie that Saturday should be spent just this way. Once at the library, they examined the directory which told what was available where and when the library was open. In the downstairs Art Room the librarian helped them find the books which Claudia selected from the card catalogue. She even brought them some others. Claudia liked that part. She always enjoyed being waited on.

Claudia began her studies never doubting that she could become an authority that morning. She had neither pencil nor paper to make notes. And she knew she wouldn’t have a lot of time to read. So she decided that she would simply remember everything, absolutely everything she read. Her net profit, therefore, would be as great as that of someone who read a great deal but remembered very little.

Claudia showed the executive ability of a corporation president. She assigned to Jamie the task of looking through the books of photographs of Michelangelo’s work to find pictures of Angel. She would do the reading.

She glanced through several thick books with thin pages and tiny print. After reading twelve pages, she looked to the end to see how many more pages there were to go: more than two hundred. The book also had footnotes. She read a few more pages and then busied herself with studying some of Jamie's picture books.

"You're supposed to do the reading!"

"I'm just using these pictures for relief," Claudia whispered. "I have to rest my eyes sometime."

“Well, I don’t see any pictures that look like that statue,” Jamie sighed.

“Keep looking. I’ll do some more reading.”

A few minutes later Jamie interrupted her. “Here he is,” he said.

“That doesn’t look anything like the statue. That’s not even a girl,” Claudia said.

“Of course not. That’s Michelangelo himself.”

Claudia replied, “I knew that.”

“Two minutes ago you didn’t. You thought I was showing you a picture of the statue.”

“Oh, I meant . . . I meant. Well . . . there’s his broken nose.” She pointed to the nose in the picture. “He got in a fight and had his nose broken when he was a teenager.”

“Was he a juvenile delinquent? Maybe they do have his fingerprints on file.”

“No, silly,” Claudia said. “He was a hot-tempered genius. Did you know he was famous even when he was alive?”

“Is that so? I thought that artists don’t become famous until after they’re dead. Like mummies.”

They studied a while longer before Jamie’s next interruption. “You know, a lot of his works were lost. They say *lost* in parentheses under the picture.”

“How can that be? A statue isn’t something like an umbrella that you leave in a taxi and lose. That is, those people who actually ride taxis; something you wouldn’t know about.”

“Well, they weren’t lost in taxis. They were lost track of.”

“What kind of a sentence is that? Lost track of?”

“Oh, boloney! There are whole long books about the lost works of Michelangelo. Picture works and sculptor works that people lost track of.”

Claudia softened. “Is the little angel one of them?”

“What’s the difference between an angel and a cupid?” Jamie inquired.

“Why?” Claudia asked.

“Because there’s a lost cupid for sure.”

“Angels wear clothes and wings and are Christian. Cupids wear bows and arrows; they are naked and pagan.”

“What’s pagan?” Jamie asked. “Boy or girl?”

“How would I know?” Claudia answered.

“You said they are naked.”

“Well, pagan has nothing to do with that. It means worshipping idols instead of God.”

“Oh,” Jamie nodded. “The statue in the museum is an angel. It’s dressed in its altogether. I don’t know yet if an angel was lost . . .” Then he glanced over at his sister and muttered, “track of.”

Claudia had begun her research confident that a morning’s study would make her completely an expert; but Michelangelo had humbled her, and humility was not an emotion with which she felt comfortable; she was irritable. Jamie ended his research where Claudia had begun: very confident and happy. He felt that his morning had been well spent; he had seen a lot of pictures and he had learned about pagan. He leaned back and yawned; he was becoming bored with pictures of David and Moses and the Sistine Ceiling; he wanted to find clues. Already he knew enough to tell if Michelangelo had sculptured the little angel. All he needed was a chance to investigate. Without the guards hurrying him. He would know, but would his opinion be accepted by the experts?

“I think we should find out how the experts decide whether or not the statue belongs to Michelangelo. That will be better than finding out about Michelangelo himself,” Jamie said.

“I know how they find out. They gather evidence like sketches he did and diaries and records of sales. And they examine the statue to see what kind of tools were used and how they were used. Like no one living in the fifteenth century would use an electric drill. How come you didn’t take art appreciation lessons with me?”

“The summer before last?”

“Yes. Before school started.”

“Well, the summer before last, I had just finished the second half of first grade.”

“So what?”

“So boloney! It was all I could do to sound out the name of Dick and Jane’s dog.”

Claudia had no answer for Jamie’s logic. Besides, Jamie agreed with her, “I guess it is better to look for clues. After all, we’re doing something that none of the experts can do.”

Claudia’s impatience surfaced. She had to pick a fight with Jamie. “Don’t be silly. They can read all this stuff, too. There’s certainly plenty of it.”

“Oh, I don’t mean that I mean that we’re living with the statue. You know what they always say: The only two ways to get to know someone are to live with him or play cards with him.”

“Well, at least the little statue can’t cheat at cards like someone else I know.”

“Claudia, dear, I’m no angel. Statue or otherwise.”

Claudia sighed, “O.K. Sir James, let’s go.” And they did.

As they were walking up the steps, Jamie spied a Hershey’s almond bar still in its wrapper lying in the corner of the landing. He picked it up and tore open one corner.

“Was it bitten into?” asked Claudia.

“No,” Jamie smiled. “Want half?”

“You better not touch it,” Claudia warned. “It’s probably poisoned or filled with marijuana, so you’ll eat it and become either dead or a dope addict.”

Jamie was irritated. “Couldn’t it just happen that someone dropped it?”

“I doubt that. Who would drop a whole candy bar and not know it? That’s like leaving a statue in a taxi. Someone put it there on purpose. Someone who pushes dope. I read once that they feed dope in chocolates to little kids, and then the kids become dope addicts, then these people sell them dope at very high prices which they just can’t help but buy because when you’re addicted you have to have your dope. High prices and all. And Jamie, we don’t have that kind of money.”

Jamie said, “Oh, well, bottoms up.” He took a big bite of the candy, chewed and swallowed. Then he closed his eyes, leaned against the wall and slid to the floor. Claudia stood with her mouth open, stunned. She was on the verge of screaming for help when Jamie opened his eyes and smiled. “It’s delicious. Want a bite?”

Claudia not only refused the bite, she also refused to talk to Jamie until they got to the restaurant. Lunch cheered her. She suggested that they play in Central Park for a while, and they did. They bought peanuts, chestnuts, and pretzels from the vendor outside the museum. They knew that since the museum opened late on Sunday, they would accumulate a lot of hunger before they got out. Their bulging pockets were now full of the staples of life: food and clothing.

Jamie entered the men's room. He had arrived, as was his custom, shortly before the first bell rang, the bell that warned everyone that the museum would close in five minutes. He waited; the bell rang. He got into a booth. First bell, second bell, it was routine just as boarding the school bus had once been routine. After the first day, they had learned that the staff worked from nine A.M. until five P.M., a work schedule just like their father's. Routine, routine. The wait from nine when the staff came until ten when the public came seemed long. Claudia and Jamie had decided that the washrooms were good for the shorter evening wait when the help left at the same time as the visitors, but the washrooms were less satisfactory for the long morning wait … especially after Jamie's close call that first morning. So time from eight forty-five until some safe time after ten in the mornings was spent under various beds. They always checked for dust under the bed first. And for once Claudia's fussi-ness was not the reason. Reason was the reason. A dustless floor meant that it had been cleaned very recently, and they stood less chance of being caught by a mop.

Jamie stood on the toilet seat waiting. He leaned his head against the wall of the booth and braced himself for what would happen next. The guard would come in and make a quick check of his station. Jamie still felt a ping during that short inspection; that was the only part that still wasn't quite routine, and that's why he braced himself. Then the lights would be turned out. Jamie would wait twelve minutes (lag time, Claudia called it) and emerge from hiding.

Except.

Except the guard didn't come, and Jamie couldn't relax until after lie felt that final ping. And the lights stayed on, stayed on. Jamie checked his watch ten times within five minutes; he shook his arm and held the watch up to his ear. It was ticking slower than his heart and much more softly. What was wrong? They had caught Claudia! Now they would look for him! He'd pretend he didn't speak English. He wouldn't answer any questions.

Then he heard the door open. Footsteps. More footsteps than usual. What was happening? The hardest part was that every corpuscle of Jamie's nine-year-old self was throbbing with readiness to run, and he had to bind up all that energy into a quiet lump. It was like trying to wrap a loose peck of potatoes into a neat four-cornered package. But he managed to freeze. He

heard the voices of two men talking over the sound of water running in the sink.

"I guess they expect even more people tomorrow."

"Yeah. Sundays are always jammed up anyway."

"It'll be easier to move the people in and out of the Great Hall."

"Yeah. Two feet of marble. What do you figure it weighs?"

"I dunno. Whatever it weighs, it has to be handled delicate. Like it was a real angel."

"C'mon. They probably have the new pedestal ready. We can start."

"Do you think they'll have as many people as they had for the Mona Lisa?"

"Naw! The Mona Lisa was here for a short time only. Besides it was the real McCoy."

"I think this one's …"

The men left, turning off the lights as they did so. Jamie heard the door close before he melted. Legs first. He sat down on the seat as he allowed the familiar darkness as well as new realization to fill him.

They were moving Angel. Did Claudia know? They wouldn't have women moving the statue. There would be no one in the ladies' room washing up. Who would give her the information? He would. By mental telepathy. He would think a message to Claudia. He folded his hands across his forehead and concentrated. "Stay put, Claudia, stay put. Stay put. Stay put. Claudia, stay put." He thought that Claudia would not approve of the grammar in his mental telegram; she would want him to think *stay in place*. But he didn't want to weaken his message by varying it one bit. He continued thinking STAY PUT.

He must have thought STAY PUT exactly hard enough, for Claudia did just that. They never knew exactly why she did, but she did. Perhaps she sensed some sounds that told her that the museum was not yet empty. Maybe she was just too tired from running around in Central Park. Maybe they were not meant to get caught. Maybe they were meant to make the discovery they made.

They waited for miles and miles of time before they came out of hiding. At last they met in their bedroom. Claudia was sorting the laundry when Jamie got there. In the dark, mostly by feel. Although there is no real difference between boys' stretch socks and girls', neither ever considered

wearing the other's. Children who have always had separate bedrooms don't.

Claudia turned when she heard Jamie come up and said, 'They moved the statue."

"How did you know? Did you get my message?"

"Message? I saw the statue on my way here. They have a dim light on it. I guess so that the night guard won't trip over it."

Jamie replied, "We're lucky we didn't get caught."

Claudia never thought very hard about the plus-luck she had; she concentrated on the minus-luck. "But they held us up terribly. I planned on our taking baths tonight. I really can't stand one night more without a bath."

"I don't mind," Jamie said.

"Come along, Sir James. To our bath. Bring your most elegant pajamas. The ones embroidered in gold with silver tassels will do."

"Where, dear Lady Claudia, dost thou expect to bathe?"

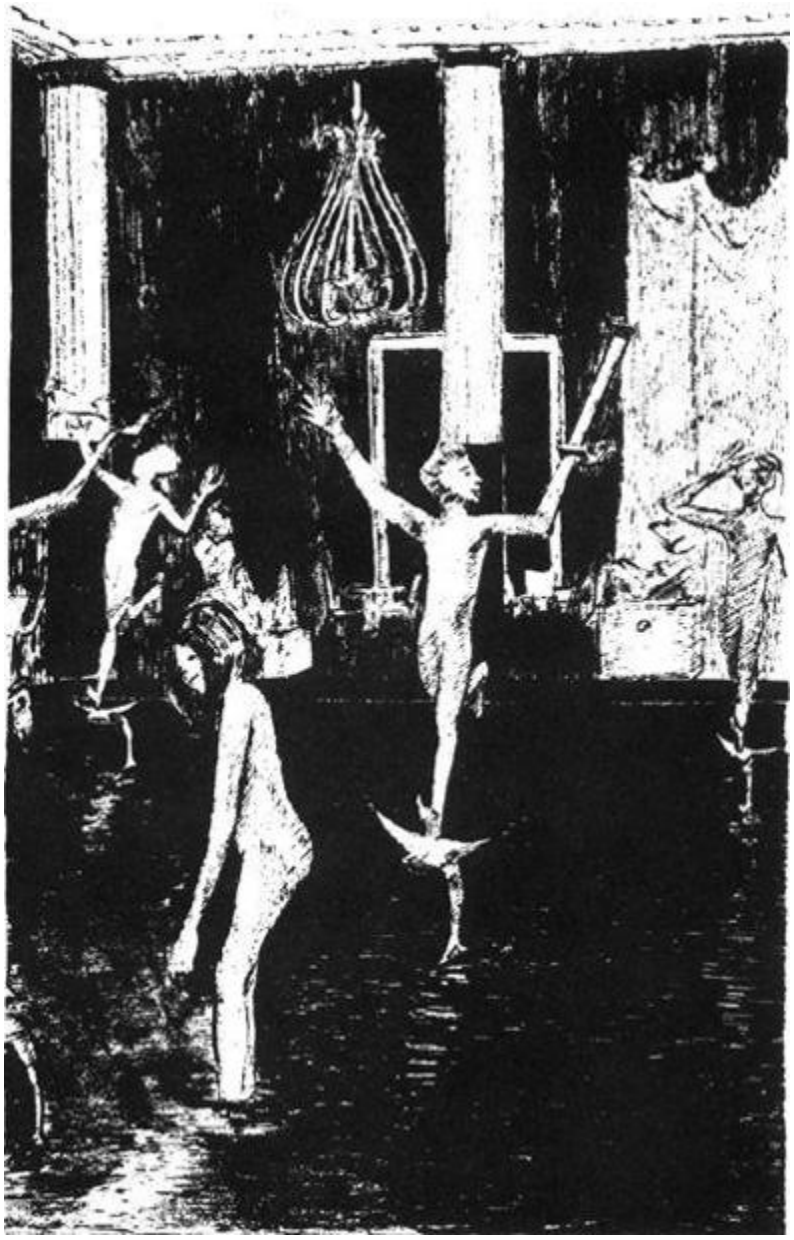
"In the fountain, Sir James. In the fountain."

Jamie extended his arm, which was draped with his striped flannel pajamas, and said, "Lady Claudia, I knew that sooner or later you would get me to that restaurant."

(It makes me furious to think that I must explain that restaurant to you, Saxonberg. I'm going to make you take me to lunch in there one day soon. I just this minute became determined to get you into the museum. You'll see later how I'm going to do it. Now about the restaurant. It is built around a gigantic fountain. Water in the fountain is sprayed from dolphins sculptured in bronze. The dolphins appear to be leaping out of the water. On their backs are figures representing the arts, figures that look like water sprites. It is a joy to sit around that wonderful fountain and to snack petit fours and sip espresso coffee. I'll bet that you'd even forget your blasted ulcer while you ate there.)

Lady Claudia and Sir James quietly walked to the entrance of the restaurant. They easily climbed under the velvet rope that meant that the restaurant was closed to the public. Of course they were not the public. They shed their clothes and waded into the fountain. Claudia had taken powdered soap from the restroom. She had ground it out into a paper towel that morning. Even though it was freezing cold, she enjoyed her bath. Jamie, too, enjoyed his bath. For a different reason.

When he got into the pool, he found bumps on the bottom; smooth bumps. When he reached down to feel one, he found that it moved! He could even pick it up. He felt its cool roundness and splashed his way over to Claudia. “Income, Claudia, income!” he whispered.



Claudia understood immediately and began to scoop up bumps she had felt on the bottom of the fountain. The bumps were pennies and nickels people had pitched into the fountain to make a wish. At least four people had thrown in dimes and one had tossed in a quarter.

“Someone very rich must have tossed in this quarter,” Jamie whispered.

“Someone very poor,” Claudia corrected. “Rich people have only penny wishes.”

Together they collected $2.87. They couldn’t hold more in their hands. They were shivering when they got out. Drying themselves as best they

could with paper towels (also taken from the restroom), they hurried into their pajamas and shoes.

They finished their preparations for the night, took a small snack and decided it was safe to wander back into the Great Hall to look again at their Angel.

"I wish I could hug her," Claudia whispered.

"They probably bugged her already. Maybe that light is part of the alarm. Better not touch. You'll set it off."

"I said 'hug' not 'bug!' Why would I want to bug her?"

"That makes more sense than to hug her."

"Silly. Shows how much you know. When you hug someone, you learn something else about them. An important something else."

Jamie shrugged his shoulders.

Both looked at Angel a long time. "What do you think?" Jamie asked. "Did he or didn't he?"

Claudia answered, "A scientist doesn't make up his mind until he's examined all the evidence."

"You sure don't sound like a scientist. What kind of scientist would want to hug a statue?"

Claudia was embarrassed, so she spoke sternly, "We'll go to bed now, and we'll think about the statue very hard. Don't fall asleep until you've really thought about the statue and Michelangelo and the entire Italian Renaissance."

And so they went to bed. But lying in bed just before going to sleep is the worst time for *organized* thinking; it is the best time for free thinking. Ideas drift like clouds in an undecided breeze, taking first this direction and then that. It was very difficult for Jamie to control his thoughts when he was tired, sleepy, and lying on his back. He never liked to get involved just before falling asleep. But Claudia had planned on their thinking, and she was good at planning. So think he did. Clouds bearing thoughts of the Italian Renaissance drifted away. Thoughts of home, and more thoughts of home settled down.

"Do you miss home?" he asked Claudia.

"Not too much," she confessed. "I haven't thought about it much."

Jamie was quiet for a minute, then he said, "We probably have no conscience. I think we ought to be homesick. Do you think Mom and Dad

raised us wrong? They're not very mean, you know; don't you think that should make us miss them?"

Claudia was silent. Jamie waited. "Did you hear my question, Claude?"

"Yes. I heard your question. I'm thinking." She was quiet a while longer. Then she asked, "Have you ever been homesick?"

"Sure."

"When was the last time?"

"That day Dad dropped us off at Aunt Zell's when he took Mom to the hospital to get Kevin."

"Me, too. That day," Claudia admitted. "But, of course, I was much younger then."

"Why do you suppose we were homesick that day? We've been gone much longer than that now."

Claudia thought. "I guess we were worried. Boy, had I known then that she was going to end up with Kevin, I would have known why we were worried. I remember you sucked your thumb and carried around that old blanket the whole day. Aunt Zell kept trying to get the blanket away from you so that she could wash it. It stank."

Jamie giggled, "Yeah, I guess homesickness is like sucking your thumb. It's what happens when you're not very sure of yourself."

"Or not very well trained," Claudia added. "Heaven knows, we're well trained. Just look how nicely we've managed. It's really their fault if we're not homesick."

Jamie was satisfied. Claudia was more. "I'm glad you asked that about homesickness, Jamie. Somehow, I feel older now. But, of course, that's mostly because I've been the oldest child forever. And I'm extremely well adjusted."

They went to sleep then. Michelangelo, Angel, and the entire Italian Renaissance waited for them until morning.

# *6*

IT WAS STILL DARK WHEN THEY AWOKE THE NEXT morning, but it was later than usual. The museum wouldn't open until one. Claudia was up first. She was getting dressed when Jamie opened his eyes.

"You know" he said, "Sunday is still Sunday. It *feels* like Sunday. Even here."

Claudia answered, "I noticed that. Do you think we ought to try to go to church when we go out?"

Jamie thought a minute before answering, "Well, let's say a prayer in that little room of the Middle Ages. The part with the pretty stained glass window."

They dressed and walked to the little chapel and knelt and said *The Lord's Prayer*. Jamie reminded Claudia to say she was sorry for stealing the newspaper. That made it officially Sunday.

"C'mon," Claudia said as she was rising, "let's go to the statue."

They walked over to Angel and looked very closely. It was difficult to look for clues. Even after their research. They were accustomed to having all the clues neatly laid out on a diagram placed in front of the exhibit.

"I still say that it's too bad we can't touch her," Claudia complained.

"At least we're living with it. We're the only two people in the whole world who live with it."

"Mrs. Frankweiler did, too. She could touch . . ."

"And hug it," Jamie teased.

"I'll bet she knows for sure if Michelangelo did it."

"Sure she does," Jamie said. He then threw his arms around himself, leaned his head way back, closed his eyes, and murmured, "Every morning when she got up, Mrs. Frankweiler would throw her arms about the statue, peer into its eyes, and say, "Speak to me, baby/One morning the statue ans . . ."

Claudia was furious. “The men who moved it last night hugged it when they moved it. There’s all kinds of hugging.”

She refused to look at Jamie again and instead stared at the statue. The sound of footsteps broke the silence and her concentration. Footsteps from the Italian Renaissance were descending upon them! The guard was coming down the steps. Oh, boloney! thought Jamie. There was just too much time before the museum opened on Sundays. They should have been in hiding already. Here they were out in the open with a light on!

Jamie grabbed Claudia’s hand and pulled her behind the booth where they rent walkie-talkies for a tour of the museum. Even though they were well hidden by the dark as they squatted there, they felt as exposed as that great bare lady in the painting upstairs.

The footsteps stopped in front of Angel. Jamie sent another mental telegram: Get going, get going, get going. Of course it worked. The guard moved on toward the Egyptian wing to cover the rest of his tour. The two children wouldn’t even allow themselves a sigh of relief. They were that well disciplined.

After ten minutes lag time, Jamie tugged the hem of Claudia’s jacket, and they cautiously got up. Jamie led the way back up the great stairway. As he did so, his logic became clear to Claudia. Thank goodness Jamie thought so clearly so fast, and thank goodness for those twenty acres of floor space. It would take the watchman more than an hour before he passed that way again.

They stealthily climbed the wide stairway, staying close to the rail. Step, pause. Step, pause. All the way to the top until they found themselves in front of the pedestal on which Angel had stood just the day before. Claudia paused to look, partly from habit and partly because anything associated with Angel was precious. Jamie paused to catch his breath.

“Why do you think they changed the velvet under her from blue to gold?” Claudia whispered.

“This blue probably got dirty. C’mon, let’s hide.”

Claudia looked again at the velvet. Light was beginning to seep into the museum. Something on top of the velvet caught her eye. “One of the workmen must have been drinking beer when he moved the statue.”

“Most people drink beer,” Jamie said. “What’s so unusual about that?”

“They don’t let visitors bring in beer,” answered Claudia. “I wonder why they allow the workers to do it? What if he had spilled it on Angel? See where he must have put his beer can on that platform.” She pointed to the blue velvet covering the pedestal. “See the rings where the pile of the velvet isn’t crushed.”

Jamie said, “Yeah, Ballantine beer. Those three rings.” Then he began humming a commercial that he had heard during the baseball game on television last spring.

Claudia interrupted, “Those are the marks of the beer can itself. After all, the emblem on the can is flat against the can. It could have been any kind of beer. Schlitz, Rheingold.”

Jamie stared at the blue velvet. “You’re right, Claude. Except for one thing.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“The rings the beer cans made would have crushed the plush of the velvet *down*. . . and the plush of this velvet is crushed *up”*

“What kind of a sentence is that? Crushed up!”

“Oh, boloney! You just go ahead and pick on my grammar. Go ahead pick on my grammar. But you can’t pick on my logic. The weight of the statue crushed all the velvet down except where the marble was chipped away and the plush was crushed up. Claudia, there’s a crushed-up W in one of those circles that is also crushed up.”

“For goodness’ sake, Jamie. That’s not a W; that’s an M.” She looked at Jamie, and her eyes widened, “M for Michelangelo!”

Jamie was rubbing his eyes. “You know, Claude, I saw that symbol yesterday on the cover of one of the books I looked at.”

“What was it, Jamie? What was it?”

“How should I know? You were supposed to be doing the reading! I was just supposed to be looking for pictures and clues.”

“James Kincaid, you are *something*. You are *absolutely* something. As if it would have hurt you to read one little thing. Just one little thing!”

Jamie said, “Well, we have a clue.”

“We could know already.”

“We have an important clue. I’ll bet they never even looked at the bottom of the statue.”

“Now we have to go back to the library today to find out what that symbol means. But we can’t! That library is closed on Sundays. Oh, Jamie, I’ve got to know.”

“We’ll check the museum bookshop. Don’t worry, Claude; I’ll recognize the book. Right now, we better hide.”

Claudia glanced at her watch. “Where are we going to hide up here? There’s no furniture. We can’t risk going downstairs again.”

Jamie picked up a corner of the blue velvet drape. “Be my guest,” he said indicating the floor under the platform with an elegant sweep of his hand.

Jamie and Claudia squatted under the platform waiting. It was close quarters under there. Jamie needed only to point his fingers to poke his sister in the ribs. “I say, Lady Claudia, I do believe we’re safe and onto something really great.”

“Perhaps, Sir James, perhaps.”

Claudia didn’t think about their close calls. They were unimportant; they wouldn’t matter in the end, the end having something to do with Michelangelo, Angel, history, and herself. She thought about the history test she had had on Monday at school. There had been a question on the test that she couldn’t answer. She had studied hard and read the chapter thoroughly. She knew where the answer was—the second paragraph in the right hand column of page 157. In her mind she could actually see *where* the *answer* was, but she couldn’t think of *what* it was.

Angel was that way. An answer to running away, and also to going home again, lay in Angel. She knew it was there, but she didn’t know what it was. It was just escaping her as the answer to the question on the test had . . . except this was even harder, for she wasn’t exactly certain of the question she was trying to answer. The question had something to do with why Angel had become more important than having run away or even being safe, at the museum. Oh! she was right back where she had started. It was too stuffy under that velvet. How could anyone think straight? No wonder her thinking came out in circles. She knew one thing for sure: maybe they had a clue.

A crowd formed in front of the museum before it opened. The guard who was to have removed the pedestal and drape was called outside to set up saw-horses and make orderly rows out of the mass of people. The museum couldn’t spare Morris until after the police had sent help for the sidewalk traffic. When he finally moved the platform and drape and took them to the basement for storage, Claudia and Jamie had already left and were browsing around the crowded bookshop peeking under the dust jackets of books about Michelangelo.

They found the book with the mark on the cover! The crushed-up mark on the dark blue velvet was Michelangelo’s stonemason’s mark. He had chipped it into the base of the marble to identify himself as owner, much as brands are burned into the hides of cattle to identify their owners.

They emerged from the bookshop feeling triumphant. And hungry.

"C'mon," Claudia shouted as soon as they got out, "Let's grab a taxi to the Automat."

"We'll walk," Jamie said.

"We have income now. All we have to do is take a bath whenever we need money."

Jamie thought a second. "O.K. I'll allow a bus."

Claudia smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Pinchpenny."

"You call me Pinchpenny, and I'll call you . . ."

"Call me a taxi," she laughed, running toward the bus stop in front of the museum.

Jamie was feeling so satisfied that he gave Claudia seventy-five cents for brunch. He allowed himself the same. As they ate, they discussed what they should do about the awesome information they had.

"Let's call the *New York Times"* Jamie suggested.

"All that publicity! They'll want to know how we found out."

"Let's call the head of the Metropolitan."

"*He'll* want to know how we found out."

"We'll tell him," Jamie said.

"Are you out of your mind?" Claudia asked. "Tell him we've been living there?"

"Don't you think we ought to tell the museum about the crushed-up mark on the velvet?"

"We owe it to them," Claudia answered. "We've been their guests all this time."

"Then you figure out how we can let them know without getting caught. I'll bet you already have it all worked out."

"As a matter of fact, I do." Claudia leaned across the table and spoke to Jamie in her best secret agent fashion. "We'll write them a letter and tell them to look at the base of the statue for an important clue."

"What if they can't figure out what the clue is?"

"We'll help them with that when they need help. We'll reveal ourselves then. And they'll be very happy to have been our hosts," Claudia said. She paused long enough for Jamie to begin to get impatient, but just begin. "Here's the plan: we rent a post office box in Grand Central. Like when you send in box tops, you always send them to P.O. Box Number So-and-so. We

write a letter and tell them to answer us at the box number. After they tell us that they need help, we reveal ourselves. As heroes."

"Can't we go home and wait? That was rough last night and this morning. Besides, then we can be heroes twice. Once when we return home and once when we reveal ourselves."

"No!" Claudia screeched. "We have to know about Angel first. We have to be right."

"Wow! What's the matter with you, Claude? You know you planned on going home sometime."

"Yes," she answered, "sometime. But not just anytime." Her voice was becoming high pitched again.

"Anytime we come home—from a visit to Grandpa's or from summer camp—they're always glad to see us."

"But it never makes any difference. Going home without knowing about Angel for sure will be the same as going home from camp. It won't be any different. After one day, maybe two, we'll be back to the same old thing. And I didn't run away to come home the same."

"Well, this has been more fun than camp. Even the food's been better. There's that difference."

"But, Jamie, it's not enough."

"Yeah, I know, it's not enough. I'm hungry most of the time."

"I mean the difference is not enough. Like being born with perfect pitch, or being born very ordinary and then winning the Congressional Medal of Honor or getting an Academy Award. Those are differences that will last a lifetime. Finding out about Angel will be that kind of difference."

"I think you're different already, Claude."

"Do you?" she asked. She was smiling and her eyes were modestly lowered, ready for a compliment.

"Yes. We're all sane, and you're insane."

"Jamie Kincaid!"

"O.K. O.K. I'm insane, too. I'll go along with you. Besides some of the complications are getting interesting, even though some are dull. How will you disguise your handwriting?"

"No need to do that. I'll use a typewriter." Claudia waited for Jamie's look of surprise.

She got it. "Where are you going to get a typewriter?"

“In front of the Olivetti place on Fifth Avenue. We passed it twice yesterday. Once when you made us walk from the laundromat. And again when we walked from library to library. It’s bolted to a stand outside the building for everyone to use. You know, sort of a sample of their product. It’s free.”

Jamie smiled, “It’s a good thing that I’m insane about walking. Otherwise, you would never have found that typewriter.”

“And it’s a good thing that I’m an excellent observer,” Claudia added.

They marched up Fifth Avenue and were delighted to find a piece of paper already in the typewriter. Across the top of the page someone had typed: Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party. Claudia didn’t know that this sentence was a common one used in practice typing. She thought it appeared appropriate to their message and would add a proper note of mystery besides. (Here, Saxonberg, is a copy of the letter Claudia typed. You can see that her typing needed a great deal of improvement.)

*Now is the time for* all good *men to come to the aid of their party;*

*Dear* Museum Head,

We *think that you should examine the bottom of the statue for an importandt clue. The statue we mean is the ocn you bought for $225.00. And the clue is that you will End Michelangelo’s stone* mason’s markk on the bottom. If you need help about this clue, you may write to us at Grande Central Post Office. Box in Manhanttan*.

Sincerely,
*Friends of the* Museum

Pleased with their effort, they felt that they could take the rest of the day off. They wandered around Rockefeller Center and watched the skaters for a short while. They watched the crowd watching the skaters for a while longer. When they returned to the museum filled with satisfaction and with snacks for their supper, they saw a long line of Sunday people waiting to climb the museum steps. Knowing that everyone in that line would be shepherded in and out, in front of and past the statue in a matter of minutes, they decided to enter through the rear entrance instead. The guard at that

door told them that they would have to use the Fifth Avenue entrance if they wished to see Angel.

"Oh, we've already seen that!" Jamie said.

The guard from friendliness, helpfulness or, perhaps, sheer loneliness (very few people had entered through his door that day) asked Jamie what he thought of it.

"Well, we need to do more research, but it seems to me that …"

Claudia pulled Jamie's arm. "Come along, AZ- *bert"* she urged.

On their way to the rooms containing Greek vases, they again observed the enormous crowd passing by the statue.

"As I was about to tell that guard, it seems to me that they should try to get to the *bottom* of the mystery."

Claudia giggled; Jamie joined in. They spent exactly enough time among the vases of ancient Greece to be able to man their waiting stations and not be discovered.

# 7

WHEN THEY LEFT THE MUSEUM ON MONDAY MORN-ing, Claudia walked to the bus stop without even consulting Jamie.

"Don't you think we ought to get breakfast first?" he asked.

"Mail early in the day" Claudia answered. "Besides, we want them to get this letter as soon as possible."

"It will get there faster if we deliver it by hand" Jamie suggested.

"Good idea. We'll get our mailbox number, write it in, and then take it to the museum office."

Since Jamie was official treasurer of the team, it was he who approached the man behind the cage window at the post office.

"I would like to rent a post office box," he declared.

"For how long?" the man inquired.

"For about two days."

"Sorry," the man said, "we rent them quarterly."

"All right, then. I'll take eight quarterlies. That makes two days."

"Quarter of a year," the man said. "That makes three months."

"Just a minute," Jamie said. He held a whispered conference with Claudia.

"Go ahead. Rent it," she urged.

"It'll cost a stack of money."

"Why don't you find out instead of arguing about it now?" Claudia's whisper began to sound like cold water hitting a hot frying pan.

"How much will a quarter of a year be?" he asked the postman.

"Four dollars and fifty cents."

Jamie scowled at Claudia. "See. I told you a stack."

Claudia shrugged her shoulders, "We'll take a long, long bath tonight."

The postman hardly looked puzzled. People working at the Grand Central Post Office grow used to strange remarks. They hear so many. They never stop hearing them; they simply stop sending the messages to their brains.

Like talking into a telephone with no one on the receiver end. “Do you or don’t you want it?” he asked.

“I’ll take it.”

Jamie paid the rent, signed a form using the name Angelo Michaels and gave his address as Marblehead, Massachusetts. He received a key to Box Number 847. Jamie-Angelo-Kincaid-Michaels felt important having a key to his own mailbox. He found his box and opened the little door.

“You know,” he remarked to Claudia, “it’s a lot like Horn and Hardart’s. Except that we could have a complete spaghetti dinner for both of us coming out of the little door instead of just empty, empty space.

Paying four dollars and fifty cents for empty space had been hard on Jamie. Claudia knew they wouldn’t take a bus back to the museum. They didn’t.

Both Claudia and Jamie wanted to deliver the letter, but neither thought he should. Too risky. They decided to ask someone to deliver it for them. Someone with a bad memory for faces. Someone their own age would be best; someone who might be nosey but who wouldn’t really care about them. It would be easiest to find a school group and select their messenger. They began their search for the group of the day by looking in the usual places: Arms and Armor, the Costume Institute, and Egyptian Art. As they approached the Egyptian wing, they heard the shuffling of feet and a sound they recognized as the folding of chairs and the gathering up of rubber mats. They weren’t anxious to hear the talk about mummies again; they never watched repeats on television, either. But they decided to look the group over. So they waited inside the tomb.

(Now, Saxonberg, I must tell you about that Egyptian tomb called a mastaba. It is not a whole one; it is the beginning of one. You can walk into it. You can spend a lot of time in it, or you can spend very little time in it. You can try to read the picture writing on the walls. Or you can read nothing at all. Whether you read or not, whether you spend a lot of time or a little in that piece of Ancient Egypt, you will have changed climate for at least that part of your day. It is not a hard place to wait in at all.)

The group was moving past the entrance. Claudia and Jamie were relaxed and waiting—wrapped up in the vacuum of time created by those warm stone walls. Puffs of conversation broke the silence of their tomb.

“Sarah looks like pharaoh. Pass it on.”

“When are we gonna eat?”

“Man, what a lot of walking.”

The conversation rained in softly and comfortably and told the two stowaways that they had the correct age group. That was the way kids in their classes always talked. Words continued to drizzle into their shelter.

“Hey, Rube, look at this.”

“C’mon, Bruce, let me borrow it.”

Something else now showered down upon them. Something much less comfortable. *Familiarity!* The names, Sarah, Bruce, Rube, were familiar … Ages ago, in time well outside the mastaba, they had heard these names—in a classroom, on a school bus …

Closer, louder, the sounds poured in. Then one small cloud burst right outside their door.

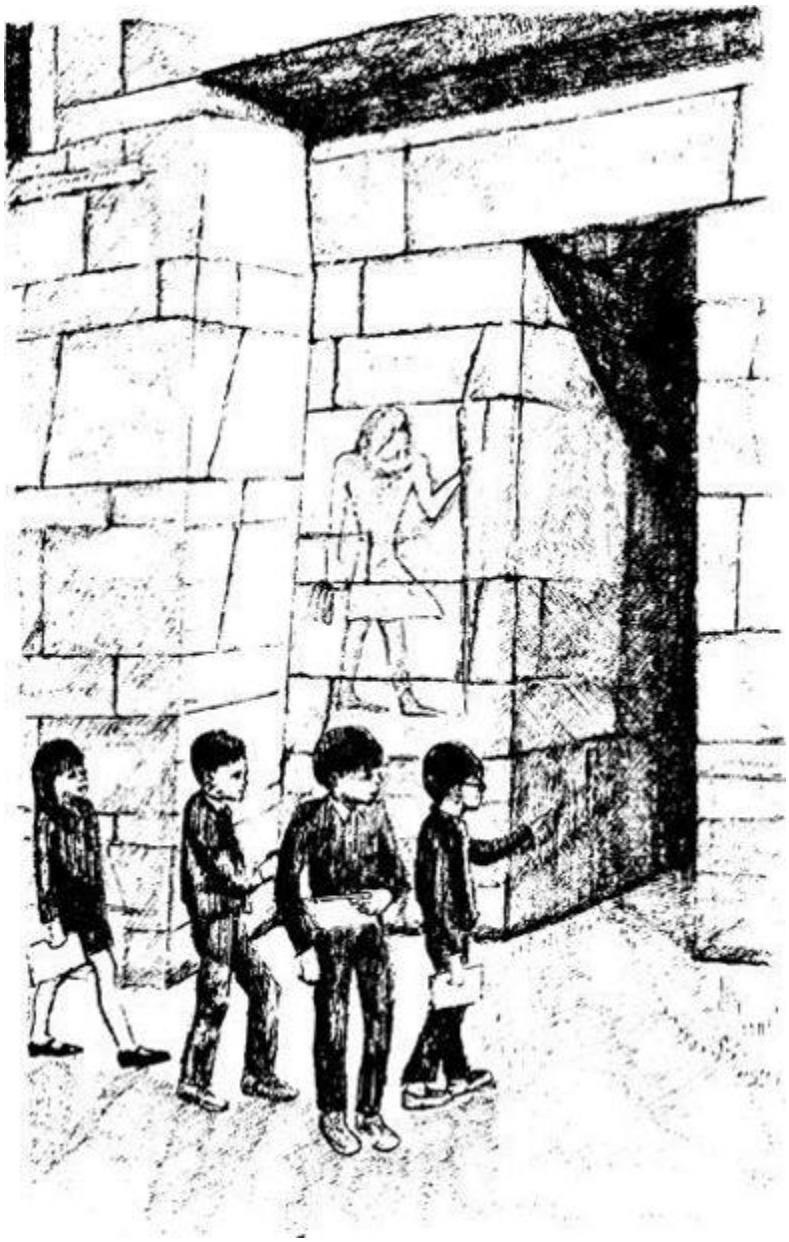
“Hey, let’s go back in here.”

Jamie’s eyes caught Claudia’s. He opened his mouth. Claudia didn’t wait to discover whether he opened it in surprise or to say something. She clamped her hand over his mouth as fast as she could.

An adult voice urged, “Come on, boys. We have to stay with the group.”

Claudia took her hand from Jamie’s mouth. She looked at him solemnly and nodded *yes*. The “come-on-boys” voice belonged to Miss Clendennan, Jamie’s third grade teacher. Rube was Reuben Hearst, and Bruce was Bruce Lansing. Sarah was Sarah Sawhill, and unfortunately, she did look a great deal like pharaoh. Believe it or not, the mountain had come to Mohammed; their school had come to them. At least, Jamie’s class had.

Jamie was furious. Why had Claudia muzzled him? Did she think he had no sense at all? He pulled his eyebrows down and made his best possible scowl. Claudia held her finger up to her lips and signaled him to stay quiet yet. The sounds of third grade shuffling and third grade jostling faded from their shelter. The quiet of the ages returned to the tomb.



But not to Jamie. He couldn't contain himself another minute. He could still feel the pressure of Claudia's hand over his mouth. "I have half a mind to join that group and go back with them and just be mysterious about where I came from."

"If you do that, it'll show that you have half a mind. Exactly half. Only half. Something I've suspected for a long time. You can't even see that this is perfect."

"How perfect?"

Claudia slowed down. “You go to the museum office. Deliver the letter. Tell them you are in the third grade group that is visiting from Greenwich and someone asked you to deliver the letter. The teacher said it would be O.K. If they ask you your name, say Bruce Lansing. But only if they ask.”

“You know, Claude, when I’m not wishing I could give you a sock right in the nose, I’m glad you’re on my team. You’re smart even if you’re hard to live with.”

“You’ll do it then?” Claudia asked.

“Yeah, I’ll do it. It *is* perfect.”

“Let’s hurry before they come back.”

Jamie entered the museum office, and Claudia stood guard outside the door. She intended to step inside the office if she spotted the class returning. Jamie wasn’t gone long. Everything had gone well, and they hadn’t asked his name. Claudia grabbed his arm as he came out. All the energy of Jamie’s wound-up nerves let loose. He collapsed as hard as if Claudia had suddenly jumped off the down end of a teeter-totter while he was still sitting on the up end.

“Yikes!” he yelled. Claudia was tempted to muzzle him again, but didn’t. Instead she led him out the door into the Fifth Avenue crowd and began walking uptown with him as fast as she could go.

# *8*

ON TUESDAY THEY AGAIN DID THEIR LAUNDRY. THE product of their efforts this time looked only slightly grayer than it had the time before. Claudia's sweater was considerably shrunken.

They knew that it was too early to get an answer to their letter, but they couldn't resist starting down to Grand Central Post Office to take a look anyway. It was noon by the time they stopped and ate breakfast at a Chock Full O'Nuts on Madison Avenue. They dragged it out beyond the patience of the people who were standing waiting to occupy their seats. Both Claudia and Jamie almost didn't want to look at their box in the post office. As long as they didn't look, they still had hopes that they could find a letter there.

They didn't. They strolled along the streets and found themselves near the United Nations building. Claudia suggested to Jamie that they take the guided tour she had read about when she was studying the Tourguide Book of the American Automobile Association.

'Today we can learn everything about the U.N."

Jamie's first question was, "How much?"

Claudia challenged him to walk in and find out. Fifty cents. Each. They could go if Claudia was willing to skip dessert that afternoon.

Jamie added, "You know, you can't have your cake and take tours, too."

"How about having tours and hot fudge sundaes, too?" Claudia asked.

They stood in line and got tickets for a tour. The girl selling tickets smiled down at them. "No school today?" she asked casually.

"No," Jamie answered. "The boiler on the furnace broke. No heat. They had to dismiss school. You should have heard the explosion! All the windows rattled. We thought it was an earthquake. Fourteen kids got cuts and abrasions, and their parents are suing the school to pay for their medical expenses. Well, it was about ten in the morning. We had just finished our spelling lesson when …"

The man behind Jamie who was dressed in a derby hat and who looked more as if he belonged in the U.N. than visiting it said, “I say, what’s holding up this line? *I repeat, what* is *holding* up this line?”

The girl gave Jamie the two tickets. As she did so, the man in the derby hat was already pushing his money onto the counter. The girl looked after Jamie and Claudia as they were leaving and said, “Where is …

She couldn’t finish her question. The man in the derby hat was scolding the girl. “No wonder it takes the U.N. forever to get something done. I’ve never seen a line move more slowly” He only looked as if he belonged; he certainly didn’t act it.

The girl blushed as she gave the man his ticket. “I hope you enjoy your tour, sir.” She acted as if she belonged.

Jamie and Claudia sat with other ticket holders waiting for their numbers to be called.

Claudia spoke softly to Jamie, “You sure are a fast thinker. Where did you cook up that story about the furnace?”

“I’ve had it ready and waiting ever since we left home. First chance I’ve had to use it,” he answered.

“I thought I had thought of everything,” Claudia said.

“That’s O.K.”

“You’re quite a kid.”

“Thanks.” Jamie smiled.

The guide who was calling the numbers finally said, “Will the people holding tickets number 106 to 121 please go to the double doors on the wall opposite this desk. There your guide will begin your tour.”

Jamie and Claudia went. Their guide was an Indian girl who wore a sari and whose long hair was bound into a single braid that hung down her back to well below her waist. With one hand she lifted the folds of her sari; her walk was flavored by her costume: her steps were short and light and there appeared to be great movement around her knees. Claudia looked at her guide’s skin and thought of smoky topaz: November, her mother’s birthstone. She listened to her guide’s accent and formed the sounds in her mind without listening to what the sounds said.

Thus, when the tour was finished, Claudia was no expert on the United Nations, but she had discovered something: saris are a way of being different. She could do two things, she decided. When she was grown, she

could stay the way she was and move to some place like India where no one dressed as she did, or she could dress like someone else—the Indian guide even—and still live in an ordinary place like Greenwich.

"How did you like those ear phones where you can tune in almost any old language at all?" Jamie asked his sister. "Pretty keen, huh?"

Claudia seemed to have a far away look in her eye.

"Yes," she answered. It sounded like "yah-ess." Jamie inspected Claudia closely. She was holding one arm crooked and the other pressed against her stomach. Her steps seemed shorter than usual and lighter than usual, and there appeared to be great movement around her knees.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked. "You got stomach cramps or something?"

Claudia lowered her eyes to him and said, "Jamie, you know, you could go clear around the world and still come home wondering if the tuna fish sandwiches at Chock Full O'Nuts still cost thirty-five cents."

"Is that what gave you stomach cramps?" he asked.

"Oh, just skip it! Just skip it." Claudia knew she would have to discover some other way to be different. Angel *would* help her somehow.

Her hopes centered more than ever on Box 847 in the post office, and the following day when they peeked through its little window, they saw an envelope. Claudia was prepared to be the discoverer of great truths, Greenwich's own heroine of the statue—and only twelve years old. Jamie was so excited that he could hardly get the key into the lock to open the box. Claudia waited while he opened it and the envelope, too. He held the letter unfolded and off-center so that they could read it together. In silence.

Saxonberg, I have here attached a copy of the actual letter which I have in my files:

> *Dear Friends of the Museum:*
>
> *We sincerely thank you for your interest in trying to help us solve the mystery of the statue. We have long known of the clue you mention; in fact, that clue remains our strongest one in attributing this work to the master, Michelangelo Buonarroti. Other evidence, however, is necessary, for it is known that Michelangelo did not carve all the marble blocks which were quarried for him and which bore his mark.*

*We cannot ignore the possibility that the work may have been done by someone else, or that someone counterfeited the mark into the stone much later. We summarize the possibilities as follows:*

1. *The work was designed and done by Michelangelo himself*.
2. *The work was designed by Michelangelo but done by someone else*.
3. *The work was neither designed nor done by Michelangelo*.

*Our hope, of course, is to End evidence to support the first of these three possibilities*.

*Neither Condivi nor Vasari, Michelangelo's biographers who knew him personally mention the master carving this little angel; they mention only the angel carved for the altar in Siena. However, in a letter he wrote to his father from Rome on August 1.9, 1497, Michelangelo mentions "... I bought a piece of marble ... I keep to myself, and I am sculpturing an image for my own pleasure" In the past experts have believed the image which he sculptured for his own pleasure to be a cupid. Now, we must examine the possibility that it was an angel*.

*The problem of Angel has now become a matter for consensus. Four Americans, two Englishmen, and one German, all of whom are experts on the techniques of Michelangelo have thus far examined the statue. We are presently awaiting the arrival of two more experts from Florence, Italy. After all of these experts have examined the statue, we will write a summary of their opinions which we will release to the press*.

*We greatly appreciate your interest and would enjoy your disclosing further clues to us if you End them*.

*Sincerely*,

*Harold* C.*Lowery*
*Public Relations*,
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

Claudia and Jamie walked from the post office to Grand Central Terminal and sat down in the waiting room. They sat perfectly quiet. Disappointed beyond words. Claudia would have felt better if the letter had not been so polite. A nasty letter or a sarcastic one can make you righteously angry, but what can you do about a polite letter of rejection? Nothing, really, except cry. So she did.

Jamie let her cry for a while. He sat there and fidgeted and counted the number of benches. She still cried; he counted the number of people on the benches. She was still at it; he calculated the number of people per bench.

After the big blobs of tears stopped, he said, "At least they treated us like grown-ups. That letter is full of big words and all."

"Big deal," Claudia sobbed. "For all they know, we *are* grown-ups." She was trying to find a corner of her shredded Kleenex that she could use.

Jamie let her sniff some, then he quietly asked, "What do we do now? Go home?"

"What? Go home now? We haven't even got our clothes. And your radio is in the violin case. We'd have to go home absolutely empty handed."

"We could leave our clothes; they're all gray anyway."

"But we never even used your radio. How can we face them at home? Without the radio and all. With nothing." She paused for a minute and repeated, "With nothing. We've accomplished nothing."

"We accomplished having fun," Jamie suggested. "Wasn't that what you wanted when we started out, Claude? I always thought it was."

Claudia began big tears again. "But that was then," she sobbed.

"You said you'd go home after you knew about Angel. Now you know."

"That's it," she sobbed. "I do not know."

"You know that you don't know. Just as the people at the museum don't know. C'mon," he pleaded, "we'll enjoy telling them about how we lived in the museum. The violin case can be evidence. Do you realize that we've lived there a whole week?"

"Yes," Claudia sighed. "Just a week. I feel as if I jumped into a lake to rescue a boy, and what I thought was a boy turned out to be a wet, fat log. Some heroine that makes. All wet for nothing." The tears flowed again.

"You sure are getting wet. You started this adventure just running away. Comfortably. Then the day before yesterday you decided you had to be a hero, too."

"Heroine. And how should I have known that I wanted to be a heroine when I had no idea I wanted to be a heroine? The statue just gave me a chance … almost gave me a chance. We need to make more of a discovery."

"So do the people at the museum. What more of a discovery do you think that you, Claudia Kincaid, girl runaway, can make? A tape recording of Michelangelo saying, 'I did it?' Well, I'll clue you in. They didn't have tape recorders 470 years ago."

"I know that. But if we make a real discovery, I'll know *how* to go back to Greenwich."

"You take the New Haven, silly. Same way as we got here." Jamie was losing patience.

"That's not what I mean. I want to know how to go back to Greenwich different."

Jamie shook his head. "If you want to go different, you can take a subway to 125th Street and then take the train."

"I didn't say *differently*, I said *different*. I want to go back different. I, Claudia Kincaid, want to be different when I go back. Like being a heroine is being different."

"Claudia, I'll tell you one thing you can do different …"

"Differently," Claudia interrupted.

"Oh, boloney, Claude. That's exactly it. You can stop ending every single discussion with an argument about grammar."

"I'll try," Claudia said quietly.

Jamie was surprised at her quiet manner, but he continued to be businesslike, "Now about this discovery."

"Jamie, I want to know if Michelangelo did it. I can't explain why exactly. But I feel that I've got to know. For sure. One way or the other. A real discovery is going to help me."

"If the experts don't know for sure, I don't mind not knowing. Let's get tickets for home." Jamie started toward the New Haven ticket window. Claudia stayed behind. Jamie realized that she was not following, returned to her, and lectured, "You're never satisfied, Claude. If you get all A's, you wonder where are the pluses. You start out just running away, and you end up wanting to know everything. Wanting to be Joan of Arc, Clara Barton, and Florence Night-ingown all in one."

“Nightingale,” Claudia sighed. She got up then and followed slowly behind her brother. But she was feeling too low to go home. She couldn’t She just couldn’t. It just wasn’t right.

There were only two windows that didn’t say, “*Closed”* They waited a short while as the man in front of them purchased a red commuter’s pass like the one that had brought them to Manhattan.

Jamie addressed the man behind the counter and said, “Two half-fare tickets for…”

“FARMINGTON, CONNECTICUT,” Claudia broke in.

“To get to Farmington, you have to go to Hartford and take a bus,” the ticket agent said.

Jamie nodded to the man and said, “Just a minute, please” He stepped away from the window, grabbing Claudia’s arm. He pulled her away.

Claudia whispered, “Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler.”

“What about Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler?”

“She lives in Farmington.”

“So what?” Jamie said. “The paper said that her house was closed.”

“Her New York house was closed. Can’t you read anything right?”

“You talk that way, Claude, and …”

“All right, Jamie. All right. I shouldn’t talk that way. But, please let’s go to Farmington. Jamie, please. Can’t you see how badly I need to find out about Angel? I just have a hunch she’ll see us and that she knows.”

“I’ve never known you to have a hunch before, Claude. You usually plan everything.”

“I have, too, had a hunch before.”

“When?”

“That night they moved the statue and I stayed in the washroom and didn’t get caught. That was a hunch. Even if I didn’t know it was a hunch at the time.”

“O.K. We’ll go to Farmington,” Jamie said. He marched to the ticket window and bought passage to Hartford.

They were waiting at track twenty-seven when Claudia said to Jamie, “That’s a first for you, too.”

“What is?” he asked.

“Buying something without asking the price first.”

“Oh, I must have done that before now,” he answered.

“When? Name one time.”

“I can’t think of it right now.” He thought a minute then said, “I haven’t been a tightwad all my life, have I?”

“As long as I’ve known you,” Claudia answered.

“Well, you’ve known me for as long as I’ve known me,” he said smiling.

“Yes,” Claudia said, “I’ve been the oldest child since before you were born.”

They enjoyed the train ride. A large portion of it went over track they had never before seen. Claudia arrived in Hartford feeling much happier than she had since they received the morning’s mail. Her self-assurance had returned to her.

The Hartford station was on Farmington Avenue. Claudia reasoned that they could not be far from Farmington itself. Why take a bus and worry about which stop to get off? Without consulting Jamie she hailed a cab. When it stopped, she got in; Jamie followed. Claudia told the driver to take them to the house of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler in Farmington, Connecticut. Claudia sat back. In a taxi at last.

(And that, Saxonberg, is how I enter the story. Claudia and Jamie Kincaid came to see me about Angel.)

# *9*

UP THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF MY LONG, WIDE, TREE-lined road they came.

"Do you suppose that Mrs. Frankweiler owns the highway?" Jamie asked.

The taxi driver answered, "This ain't no highway. It's all her propitty. I tell ya, this dame's loaded. In front of the house this here begins to resemble wattcha call a *normal* driveway."

Claudia discovered that indeed it does. My tree-lined avenue circles in front of my house. Jamie looked up at my house and said, "Another museum."

Claudia answered, "Then we should feel very much at home."

Jamie paid the taxi driver. Claudia pulled his arm and whispered, "Tip him."

Jamie shrugged his shoulders and gave the driver some money. The driver smiled, took off his hat, bowed from the waist, and said, "Thank you, sir."

After he drove away Claudia asked, "How much did you give him?"

Jamie answered, "All I had."

"That was stupid," Claudia said. "Now, how are we going to get back?"

Jamie sighed, "I gave him seventeen cents. So it wasn't such a great tip. Also, it would never be enough to get us back. We're broke. How do you feel about that, Miss Taxi Rider?"

"Pretty uncomfortable," she murmured. "There's something nice and safe about having money."

"Well, Claude, we just traded safety for adventure. Come along, Lady Claudia."

"You can't call me Lady Claudia anymore. We're paupers now."

They ascended the low, wide steps of my porch. Jamie rang the bell. Parks, my butler, answered.

"We'd like to see Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler," Jamie told him.

“Whom shall I say is calling?”

Claudia cleared her throat, “Claudia and James Kincaid.”

“Just one moment, please.”

They were left standing in the reception hall more than “one-moment-please” before Parks returned.

“Mrs. Frankweiler says she doesn’t know you.”

“We would like her to,” Claudia insisted.

“What is the nature of your business?” he asked. Parks always asks that.

Both hesitated. Jamie decided on an answer first, “Please tell Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler that we are seeking information about the Italian Renaissance.”

Parks was gone a full ten minutes before his second return. “Follow me,” he commanded. “Mrs. Frankweiler will see you in her office.”

Jamie winked at Claudia. He felt certain that mentioning the Italian Renaissance had intrigued me.

They walked behind Parks through my living room, drawing room, and library. Rooms so filled with antique furniture, Oriental rugs, and heavy chandeliers that you complain that they are also filled with antique air. Well, when a house is as old as mine, you can expect everything in it to be thickened by time. Even the air. My office surprised them after all this. It surprises everyone. (You once told me, Saxonberg, that my office looks more like a laboratory than an office. That’s why I call what I do there *research.)* I suppose it does look like a lab furnished as it is with steel, Formica, vinyl and lit by fluorescence. You must admit though that there’s one feature of the room that looks like an office. That’s the rows and rows of filing cabinets that line the walls.

I was sitting at one of the tables wearing my customary white lab coat and my baroque pearl necklace when the children were brought in.

“Claudia and James Kincaid,” Parks announced.

I allowed them to wait a good long while. Parks had cleared his throat at least six times before I turned around. (Of course, Saxonberg, you know that I hadn’t wasted the time between Park’s announcement that Claudia and James Kincaid wanted to see me and the time they appeared at the office. I was busy doing research. That was also when I called you. You sounded like anything but a lawyer when I called. Disgusting!) I could hear the children shuffling back and forth impatiently. The importance of Parks’s

manner is what kept them from interrupting me. They shuffled and scratched, and Jamie even emitted two very false sneezes to attract my attention. It's particularly easy for me to ignore fake sneezes, and I went on with my research.

I don't like to waste time, so when I at last turned around, I did so abruptly and asked directly, "Are you the children who have been missing from Greenwich for a week?" (You must admit, Saxonberg, that when the need arises, I have a finely developed sense of theatrics.)

They had become so used to not being discovered that they had entirely forgotten that they were runaways. Now their reaction was one of amazement. They both looked as if their hearts had been pushed through funnels.

"All right," I said. "You don't have to tell me. I know the answer."

"How did you know about us?" Jamie asked.

"Did you call the police?" Claudia asked at the same time.

"From the newspapers," I replied, pointing to Jamie. "And no," I replied pointing to Claudia. "Now both of you sit down here and talk about the Italian Renaissance."

Jamie glanced at the newspapers I had been researching. "We're in the newspapers?" He seemed pleased.

"Even your pictures," I nodded.

"I'd like to see that," Claudia said. "I haven't had a decent picture taken since I've been able to walk."

"Here you are." I held out several papers. "Two days before yesterday you were on the fifth page in Hartford, the second page in Stamford and the front page in Greenwich."

"The front page in Greenwich?" Claudia asked.

"That's my school picture from the first grade!" Jamie exclaimed. "See, I don't have one of my front teeth."

"Goodness! This picture of me is three years old. Mother never even bought my school pictures the last two years." Claudia held her picture up for Jamie to see. "Do you think I still look like this?"

"Enough!" I said. "Now, what do you want to tell me about the Italian Renaissance?"

"Is your butler calling the police while you stall us here?" Jamie asked.

“No,” I answered. “And I refuse to keep reassuring you. If you keep on with this kind of talk, I shall find you so dull that I shall call your parents as well as the police to get rid of you. Is that clear, young man?”

“Yes,” Jamie muttered.

“Young lady?”

Claudia nodded yes. They both stood with bowed heads. Then I asked Jamie, “Do I frighten you, young man?”

Jamie looked up. “No, ma’am. I’m quite used to frightening things. And you’re really not so bad looking.”

“So bad looking? I wasn’t referring to the way I look.” Actually, I never think much about that any more. I rang for Parks. When he arrived I told him to please bring me a mirror. Everyone waited in silence until Parks returned with the mirror. Silence continued as I picked it up and began a very long and close inspection of my face.

It’s not a bad face except that lately my nose seems to have grown longer, and my upper lip appears to have collapsed against my teeth. These things happen when people get older. And I am getting just that. I ought to do something about my hair besides have Parks cut it for me. It’s altogether white now and looks like frayed nylon thread. Maybe, I’ll take time out and get a permanent wave, except that I hate beauty parlors.

“My nose has gotten longer. Like Pinocchio. But not for the same reason. Well, not most of the time” I said as I put down the mirror. Claudia gasped, and I laughed. “Oh, so you were thinking the same thing? No matter. I never really look past my eyes. That way I always feel pretty. Windows of the soul, you know.”

Claudia took a step closer to me. “You really do have beautiful eyes. They’re like looking into a kaleidoscope—the way those golden flecks in them keep catching the light.”

She was quite close to me now and actually peering into my face. It was uncomfortable. I put a stop to that.

“Do you spend much time looking in mirrors, Claudia?”

“Some days I do. Some days I don’t.”

“Would you care to look now?”

“No, thank you,” she said.

“Well, then,” I said, “we’ll continue. Parks, please return this mirror. We want to talk about the Italian Renaissance. James, you haven’t said one

word since you told me that I look frightening. Speak now."

"We want to know about the statue," Jamie stammered.

"Speak up, boy," I commanded. "What statue?"

"The statue in the Metropolitan Museum in New York City. In Manhattan. The one of the angel."

"The one you sold for $225," Claudia added.

I walked over to my files of newspaper clippings and pulled out a manilla folder, the one which has all the newspaper clippings about the auction and

the museum buying the statue. It also contains the article about the crowds going to see the statue.

"Why did you sell her?" Claudia asked pointing to the picture of Angel.

"Because I don't like to donate things."

"If I owned such a lovely statue, I'd never sell it. Or donate it either. I'd cherish it like a member of my own family," Claudia preached.

"Considering all the trouble you've caused your family, that isn't saying very much."

"Have they been worried?" she asked.

"If you hadn't been so busy looking at your picture in the paper, you could have read that they are nearly frantic."

Claudia blushed. "But I wrote them a letter. I told them not to worry."

"Evidently your letter didn't work. Everyone is worried."

"I told them not to," she repeated. "We're going home anyway as soon as you tell us if Michelangelo carved Angel. Did he do it?"

"That's my secret," I answered. "Where have you been all week?"

'That's our secret," Claudia answered, lifting her chin high.

"Good for you!" I cheered. Now I was certain that I liked these two children. "Let's go to lunch" Examining the two of them in that bright light I saw that they looked wrinkled, dusty, and gray. I instructed them to wash up while I told the cook to prepare for two more.

Parks led Jamie to one bathroom; my maid, Hor-tense, led Claudia to another. Apparently, Claudia had never enjoyed washing up so much. She took forever doing it. She spent a great deal of time looking into all the mirrors. Examining her eyes very carefully, she decided that she, too, was beautiful. But mostly her thoughts were about the beautiful black marble bathtub in that bathroom.

(Even in this very elegant house of mine, that bathroom is especially grand. All the walls are black marble except for one that is mirrored entirely. The faucets are gold, and the spigot is shaped like a dragon's head. The tub looks like a black marble swimming pool sunken into the floor; there are two steps down to the bottom.)

There was nothing she wanted more than to take a bath in that tub. She examined her eyes a little longer and then spoke to her image in the mirror, "You'll never have a better chance, Lady Claudia. Go ahead. Do it." So she did. She opened the taps and began undressing as the tub was filling up.

Meanwhile, Jamie had done his customary job of washing up. That is, he had washed the palms but not backs of his hands, his mouth but not the eyes of his face. He emerged from the bathroom long before Claudia and growing impatient, began wandering through rooms until he found Hortense and asked her the whereabouts of his sister. He followed directions to Claudia's bathroom where he heard the water still running. It takes a lot of water to fill that tub.

"Suicide!" he thought. "She's going to drown herself because we're caught." He tried the door; it was locked.

"Claudia," he yelled, "is anything the matter?"

"No," she answered. "I'll be right there."

"What's taking you so long?"

"I'm taking a bath," she called.

"Oh, boloney," Jamie answered. He walked away to find me. I was waiting in the dining room. I'm accustomed to eating on time, and I was hungry.

"That nutty sister of mine is taking a bath. Don't mind her. She even takes baths when she comes in from swimming. She even made us take baths while we were hiding at the Metropolitan Museum. I think we should start without her."

I smiled, "I think, James, that you already have."

I rang for Parks, and he appeared with the salad and began serving.

"How did Claudia manage to take a bath in the museum?" I asked casually.

"In the fountain. It was cold, but I didn't mind when we found . . . Uh oh. Uuuuh. Ooooh. I did it. I told. I did it." He rested his elbow on the table and his chin on his hand. He slowly shook his head. "Sometimes I stink at keeping secrets. Don't tell Claudia I told. Please."

"I'm curious to know how you managed." I *was* curious, and you know that I can be absolutely charming when I want information.

"Let Claude tell you all that. She did the planning. I managed the money. She's big on ideas, but she's also big on spending money. I managed fine until today. Now we're broke. Not one cent left to get back to Greenwich."

"You can walk or hitchhike."

"Try telling that to Claude."

“Or you can turn yourselves in. The police will take you back, or your parents will come and get you.”

“Maybe that will appeal to Claudia, but I doubt it. Even though she sure doesn’t approve of making herself walk.”

“Perhaps we can work out a deal. You give me some details, and I’ll give you a ride back.”

Jamie shook his head. “You’ll have to work that out with Claude. The only kind of deal I can make concerns money, and we don’t have any more of that.”

“You are poor, indeed, if that’s the only kind of a deal you can make.”

Jamie brightened. “Would you like a game of cards?”

“Which game?” I asked.

“War.”

“I assume you cheat.”

“Yeah.” he sighed.

“I may decide to play after lunch anyway.”

“Can we start eating now?” Jamie asked.

“You don’t worry about manners too much do you?

“Oh,” he replied, “I don’t worry about them too much when I’m this hungry.”

“You’re honest about some things.”

Jamie shrugged his shoulders. “You might say that I’m honest about everything except cards. For some reason I’m helpless about cheating at cards.”

“Let’s eat,” I said. I was anxious, for I do enjoy a good game of cards, and Jamie promised to provide just that.

Claudia appeared as we were finishing our soup. I saw that she was annoyed that we had not waited for her. She was all bound up in concern for good manners, and she wanted very much to let us know that she was annoyed and why. She acted cool. I pretended I didn’t notice. Jamie didn’t pretend; he simply did not notice.

“I’ll skip the soup,” Claudia announced. “It’s good,” Jamie said. “Sure you don’t want to try it?”

“No, thank you” Claudia said. Still cool.

I summoned Parks; he appeared bearing a silver casserole.

“What’s that?” Jamie asked.

"*Nouilles et fromage en casserole,"* Parks answered.

Claudia showed interest. 'Til have some, please. Sounds like something special."

Parks served. Claudia looked down at her plate, looked up at me and moaned, "Why, it's nothing but macaroni and cheese."

"You see," I laughed, "under the fancy trappings, I'm just a plain lady."

Claudia laughed then. We all did, and we began enjoying our lunch. I asked Claudia what she would like to do while Jamie and I played cards. She said that she would like to just watch us and think.

"Think about what?"

"About how we're going to get back home."

"Call up your family," I suggested. "They'll come for you."

"Oh, it's so hard to explain over the phone. It will cause so much commotion."

I was astounded. "You still don't think you've caused any commotion so far?"

"I haven't really thought about it very hard. I've been so busy worrying about Michelangelo and avoiding getting caught. If only you'd tell me if the statue was done by Michelangelo. Then I would feel that I could go home again."

"Why would that make a difference?" I asked.

"It would because . . . because . . ."

"Because you found that running away from home didn't make a real difference? You were still the same Greenwich Claudia, planning and washing and keeping things in order?"

"I guess that's right" Claudia said quietly.

"Then why did you run away?"

Claudia's words came slowly; she was forming thoughts into the shape of words for the first time in a long time. "I got the idea because I was mad at my parents. That was getting the idea. Then I started planning it. I thought that I had to think of everything, and I thought of an awful lot. Didn't I, Jamie?" She looked over at her brother, and he nodded. "I enjoyed the planning. Without anyone knowing that I was doing it. I am very good at planning."

"And the more plans you made, the more it became like living at home away from home," I interrupted.

“That’s true,” she said. “But we did enjoy living away from home in a mild kind of way.”

(Notice that Claudia is still being very careful not to reveal to me where she and Jamie stayed. I wasn’t ready to push yet. I felt I had to help the child. Don’t laugh as you read this, Saxonberg; I do have some charity in me.)

“What part of living away from home did you like the best?”

Jamie answered first. “Not having a schedule.”

Claudia became impatient. “But, Jamie, we did have a schedule. Sort of. The best that I could manage under the circumstances. *That* wasn’t the most fun part of running away.”

“What was the most fun part for you, Claudia?”

“First, it was hiding. Not being discovered. And after hiding became easy, there was Angel. Somehow, Angel became more important than running away.”

“How did Angel become involved with your running away?” I purred.

“I won’t tell you,” Claudia answered.

I put on my surprised look and asked, “Why not?”

“Because if I tell you how Angel got involved, it will be telling you too much else.”

“Like telling me where you’ve been all week?”

“Maybe,” she answered coolly.

“Why don’t you want to tell me that?”

“I told you before; that’s *our* secret.”

“Oho! You don’t want to lose your bargaining weapon,” I crowed. “Is that why you’re not telling me where you stayed?”

“That’s part of the reason,” she said. “The other part is—I think the other part is—that if I tell, then I know for sure that my adventure is over. And I don’t want it to be over until I’m sure I’ve had enough.”

“The adventure is over. Everything gets over, and nothing is ever enough. Except the part you carry with you. It’s the same as going on a vacation. Some people spend all their time on a vacation taking pictures so that when they get home they can show their friends evidence that they had a good time. They don’t pause to let the vacation enter inside of them and take that home.”

“Well, I don’t really want to tell you where we’ve been.”

“I know,” I answered.

Claudia looked at me. “Do you know I don’t want to tell you, or do you know where we’ve been? Which do you mean?”

“Both,” I told her quietly. I resumed eating *nouilles et fromage en casserole*.

Claudia looked over at Jamie. Jamie had slipped down in his seat and had thrown his napkin over his face. Claudia jumped up from her seat, grabbed the napkin off Jamie’s face. Jamie quickly threw his forearms where the napkin had been.

“It slipped, Claude; it slipped out.” Jamie’s voice was muted since his forearms were protecting his mouth.

“Jamie! Jamie! That was all I had. All we had. The only thing we had left.”

“I just forgot, Claude. It’s been so long since I’ve had a conversation with anyone but you.”

“You shouldn’t have told her. You heard me say to her that that was our secret. Twice. Now everything is lost. How can I get her to tell? You had to go and blab it all. Blabbermouth!”

Jamie looked at me for sympathy. “She does get emotional.”

“Claudia” I said, “be seated.”

She obeyed. I continued. “All is not lost. I’m going to make a bargain with you. Both of you. First of all, stop referring to me as *her*. I am Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. Then if you give me all the details of your running away, if you tell me everything—*everything*— ril give you a ride home. I’ll have Sheldon, my chauffeur, drive you home.”

Claudia nodded “no.”

“A Rolls Royce, Claudia. And a chauffeur. That’s a very fine offer,” I teased.

Jamie said, “How about it, Claude? It beats walking.”

Claudia squinted her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest. “It’s not enough. I want to know about Angel.”

I was glad that I wasn’t dealing with a stupid child. I admired her spirit; but more, I wanted to help her see the value of her adventure. She still saw it as buying her something: appreciation first, information now. Nevertheless, Claudia was tiptoeing into the grown-up world. And I

decided to give her a little shove. “Claudia. James. Both of you. Come with me.”

We walked single file through several rooms to my office. For a minute I thought I was leader in a game of follow-the-leader.

Jamie caught up with me and said, “For an old lady you sure can walk fast.”

Claudia then caught up with Jamie and kicked him.

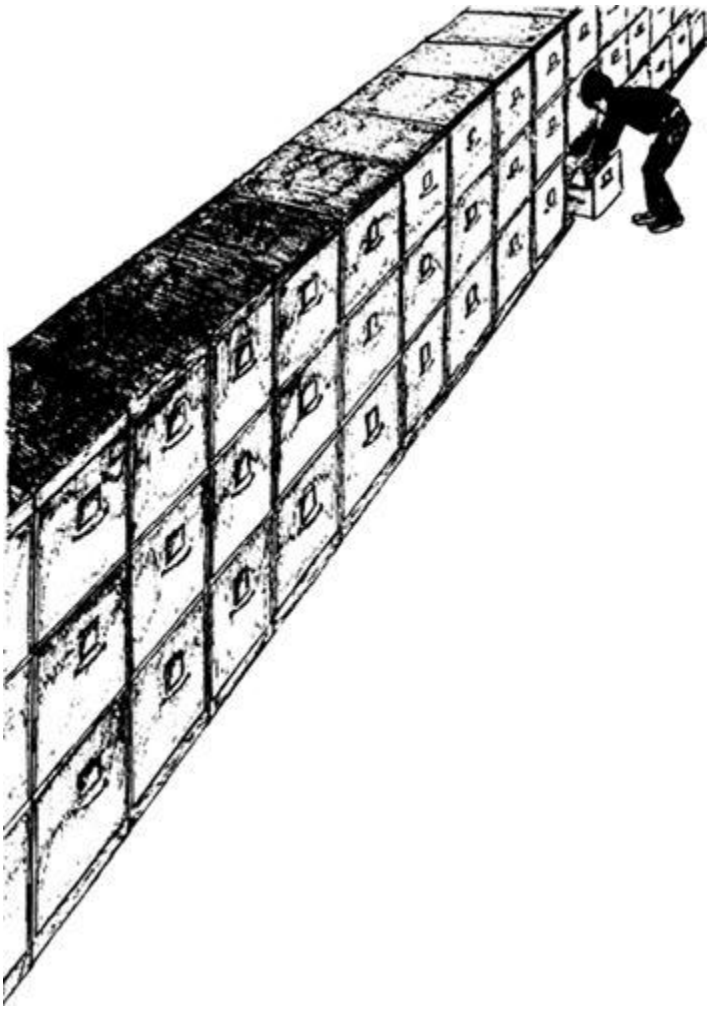
We arrived at my office, and I motioned for them to sit down.

“Do you see those filing cabinets along that wall?” I asked pointing to the south wall. “Those are my secrets. In one of them is the secret of Michelangelo’s Angel. I’ll share that secret with you as the rest of my bargain. But now my information is more important than yours. So you must have a handicap. The handicap is that you must find the secret file yourselves, and you have one hour to do it in.” I turned to leave, then remembered, “And I don’t want my files messed up or placed out of order. They’re in a special order that makes sense only to me. If you move things around, I won’t be able to find anything. And our whole arrangement will be off.”

Jamie spoke, “You sure know how to nervous a guy.”

I laughed and left the room. I tiptoed into the large closet I have next to my office. From there I watched and listened to all they did.

Jamie got up immediately and began opening file drawers. Claudia shouted, “STOP!” He did.



“What’s the matter with you, Claude? We have only one hour.”

“Five minutes of planning are worth fifteen minutes of just looking. Quick, give me the pencil and note pad from that table.” Jamie ran to get them. Claudia immediately began making a list. “Here’s what we’ll look up. I’ll take the odd numbers; you take the even.”

“I want odd.”

“For goodness’ sake, Jamie, take odds then.”

Here’s the list Claudia wrote:

1. Michelangelo
2. Buonarroti
3. Angel
4. Parke Bernet Galleries
5. Metropolitan Museum of Art

6. Italian Renaissance
7. Auctions
8. Sculptor
9. Marble
10. Florence, Italy
11. Rome, Italy

Jamie looked over the list. “I changed my mind. I’ll take evens. There’s one less.”

“Talk about wasting time!” Claudia screamed. “Take evens then, but get to it.”

They began to work very rapidly. Claudia once or twice cautioned Jamie not to make a mess. They had exhausted the list, odds as well as evens. There were folders on most of the categories they looked up, but upon examining them, they found not one hint of Angel. Claudia was feeling depressed. She looked at the clock. Six minutes to go.

“Think, Jamie, think. What else can we look up?”

Jamie squinted his eyes, a sign that he was thinking hard. “Look him up under . . .”

“What kind of language is that? Look him *up under* …”

“Oh, boloney, Claude. Why do you always pick on my gra…”

“Boloney, boloney! That’s it, Jamie. She bought Angel in Bologna, Italy. The paper said so. Look up Bologna.” Both ran back to the files and pulled out a file folder fat with papers and documents. It was labeled: BOLOGNA, ITALY. They knew even before opening it that it was the right one. I knew, too. They had found the file that held the secret.

Claudia was no longer in a hurry; she sauntered over to a table, carefully laid down the file, smoothed her skirt under her, and sat in a chair. Jamie was jumping up and down, “Hurry up, Claude. The hour is almost over.”

Claudia was not to be hurried. She carefully opened the folder, almost afraid of what she would find. The evidence was sealed between two sheets of glass. The evidence was a very special, very old piece of paper. On one side was written a poem, a sonnet. Since it was written in Italian, neither Claudia nor Jamie could read it. But they could see that the handwriting was angular and beautiful, in itself almost a work of art. And there was a signature: Michelangelo. The other side of the paper needed no translation.

For there, in the midst of sketches of hands and torsos was a sketch of someone they knew: Angel. There were the first lines of a thought that was to become a museum mystery 470 years later. There on that piece of old paper was the idea just as it had come from Michelangelo's head to his hand, and he had jotted it down.

Claudia looked at the sketch until its image became blurred. She was crying. At first she said nothing. She simply sat on the chair with tears slowly streaming down her face, hugging the glass frame and shaking her head back and forth. When at last she found her voice, it was a hushed voice, the voice she used for church. "*Just* think, Jamie, Michelangelo himself touched this. Over four hundred years ago."

Jamie was looking through the rest of the folder. "The glass" he said. 'I'll bet he didn't touch the glass. Are his fingerprints on it?" He didn't wait for an answer before asking something else. "What do you suppose the rest of these papers are?"

"They are my research on Angel," I answered as I emerged from my hiding place in the closet. "He did it in Rome, you know. I just file it under *B* for Bologna to make it hard."

Both children looked up at me startled. Just as they had lost all their feelings of urgency, they had also lost all thoughts of me. Finding a secret can make everything else unimportant, you know.

Claudia said nothing and nothing and nothing. She continued clutching the drawing to her chest and rocking it back and forth. She appeared to be in a trance. Jamie and I stared at her until she felt our eyes focused on her like four laser beams. She looked up at us then and smiled.

"Michelangelo did sculpture the statue, didn't he, Mrs. Frankweiler?"

"Of course. I've known for a long time that he did. Ever since I got that sketch."

"How did you get the sketch?" Jamie asked.

"I got it after the war … ."

"Which war?" Jamie interrupted.

"World War II. Which war did you think I meant? The American Revolution?"

"Are you that old?" Jamie asked.

"I'm not even going to answer that."

Claudia said, “Hush, Jamie. Let her tell us.” But she couldn’t hush either. She rushed in with an explanation, “I’ll bet you helped some rich Italian nobleman or some descendant of Michelangelo’s to escape, and he gave you the sketch out of his undying gratitude.”

“That’s one explanation. But not the correct one. There was a rich Italian nobleman involved. That part is right.”

“Did he sell it to you?” Jamie asked.

Claudia rushed in again with another explanation, “He had this beautiful daughter and she needed this operation very badly and you …”

Jamie interrupted. “Hush, Claudia.” Then he asked me, “Why did he give it to you?”

“Because he was a very, very bad poker player, and I am a very good one.”

“You won it at cards?” I could see admiration grow in Jamie’s eyes.

“Yes I did.”

“Did you cheat?” he asked.

“Jamie, when the stakes are high, I never cheat. I consider myself too important to do that.”

Jamie asked, “How come you don’t sell the sketch? You could get quite a boodle for it. Being that it matches up with the statue and all.”

“I need having the secret more than I need the money,” I told him.

I knew that Claudia understood. Jamie looked puzzled.

“Thank you for sharing your secret with us,” Claudia whispered.

“How do you know that we’ll keep your secret?” Jamie asked.

“Now, now, a boy who cheats at cards should be able to answer that.”

Jamie’s face broke into a huge grin. “Bribery!” he exclaimed. “You’re going to bribe us. Hallelujah! Tell me. I’m ready. What’s the deal?”

I laughed. “The deal is this: you give me the details of your running away, and I’ll give you the sketch.”

Jamie gasped. “That doesn’t sound like bribery. That doesn’t even sound like you, Mrs. Frankweiler. You’re smarter than that. How do you know that I won’t slip about your secret as I did about the museum?”

That boy really amused me. “You’re right, Jamie. I am smarter than that. I’ve got a method to keep you slip-proof about the sketch.”

“What’s that?”

"I'm not going to give you the sketch outright. I'm going to leave it to you in my will. You won't tell my secret because if you do, I'll write you out of my will. You would lose all that money. You said that the sketch was worth quite a boodle. So you're going to be very good about keeping this secret. Claudia will keep quiet for a different reason. Her reason happens to be the same as mine."

"Which is what?" Jamie asked.

"Simply because it is a secret. It will enable her to return to Greenwich *different."*

Claudia looked at Jamie and nodded. Something I had just said made sense.

I continued, "Returning with a secret is what she really wants. Angel had a secret and that made her exciting, important. Claudia doesn't want adventure. She likes baths and feeling comfortable too much for that kind of thing. Secrets are the kind of adventure she needs. Secrets are safe, and they do much to make you different. On the inside where it counts. I won't actually be getting a secret from you; I'll be getting details. I'm a collector of all kinds of things besides art," I said pointing to my files.

"If all those files are secrets, and if secrets make you different on the inside, then your insides, Mrs. Frankweiler, must be the most mixed-up, the most different insides I've ever seen. Or any doctor has ever seen, either."

I grinned. "There's a lifetime of secrets in those files. But there's also just a lot of newspaper clippings. Junk. It's a hodgepodge. Like my art collection. Now, you'll tell me all about your running away, and I'll add that to my files."

Whereas Jamie's excitement bubbled out of him in grins and spurts of jittering around the room, Claudia's excitement flowed not bubbled. I could see that she was a little surprised. She had known that Angel would have the answer, but she had expected it to be a loud bang, not a quiet soaking in. Of course secrets make a difference. That was why planning the runaway had been such fun; it was a secret. And hiding in the museum had been a secret. But they weren't permanent; they had to come to an end. Angel wouldn't. She could carry the secret of Angel inside her for twenty years just as I had. Now she wouldn't have to be a heroine when she returned home … except to herself. And now she knew something about secrets that she hadn't known before.

I could tell that she felt happy. Happiness is excitement that has found a settling down place, but there is always a little corner that keeps flapping around. Claudia could have kept her doubts to herself, but she was an honest child, an honorable child.

"Mrs. Frankweiler," she said swallowing hard, "I really love the sketch. I really do. I love it. Just love, love, love it. But don't you think you ought to give it to the museum. They're just dying to find out whether the statue is real or not."

"Nonsense! What a conscience you suddenly have. I want to give it to you. In exchange. If you and Jamie want to give it to the museum after you inherit it, then you give it to the museum. I won't let the museum people near here. If I could keep them out of Connecticut altogether, I would. I don't want them to have it while I'm alive."

Claudia wiped her forehead with the sleeve of her sweater and asked, "Why not?"

"I've thought about that for a long time, and I've decided 'why not?' What they'll do is start investigating the authenticity of the sketch. They'll call in authorities from all over the world. They'll analyze the ink. And the paper. They'll research all his illustrated notes and compare, compare, compare. In short, they'll make a science of it. Some will say 'yes.' Some will say 'no.' Scholars will debate about it. They'll poll all the authorities, and probably the majority will agree that the note and the statue are really the work of Michelangelo. At least that's what they should conclude. But some stubborn ones won't agree, and thereafter the statue and the sketch will appear in books with a big question mark. The experts don't believe in coincidence as much as I do, and I don't want them to throw doubt on something that I've felt always, and actually known for about twenty years."

Claudia's eyes widened, "But, Mrs. Frankweiler, if there is the slightest doubt that either the statue or the sketch is a forgery, don't you want to know? Don't you want the last little bit of doubt cleared up?"

"No," I answered abruptly.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm eighty-two years old. That's why. There now, Jamie, you see, I slip too. Now I've told you how old I am."

Jamie looked at his sister and asked, “What’s that got to do with anything, Claude?” Claudia shrugged.

“I’ll tell you what it’s got to do with it,” I said. “I’m satisfied with my own research on the subject. I’m not in the mood to learn anything new.”

Claudia said, “But, Mrs. Frankweiler, you should want to learn one new thing every day. We did even at the museum.”

“No,” I answered, “I don’t agree with that. I think you should learn, of course, and some days you must learn a great deal. But you should also have days when you allow what is already in you to swell up inside of you until it touches everything. And you can feel it inside you. If you never take time out to let that happen, then you just accumulate facts, and they begin to rattle around inside of you. You can make noise with them, but never really feel anything with them. It’s hollow.”

Both children were quiet, and I continued. “I’ve gathered a lot of facts about Michelangelo and Angel. And I’ve let them grow inside me for a long time. Now I feel that I know. That’s enough for that. But there is one new thing that I’d like to experience. Not know. Experience. And that one thing is impossible.”

“Nothing is impossible,” Claudia said. She sounded to me exactly like a bad actress in a bad play-unreal.

“Claudia,” I said patiently, “When one is eighty-two years old, one doesn’t have to learn one new thing every day, and one knows that some things are impossible.”

“What would you like to experience that is impossible?” Jamie asked.

“Right now, I’d like to know how your mother feels.”

“You keep saying that she’s frantic. Why do you want to feel frantic?” This came from Claudia. Now she sounded like the real Claudia Kincaid.

“It’s an experience I would like to have because it’s part of a bigger experience I want.”

Claudia said, “You mean you’d like to be a mother?”

Jamie leaned toward Claudia and whispered in the loudest, wettest whisper I have ever heard, “Of course that’s impossible. Her husband is dead. You can’t be a mother without a husband.”

Claudia poked Jamie, “Never call people *dead;* it makes others feel bad. Say ‘deceased’ or ‘passed away.

“Come now, children. Put away the file. You must tell me all about your adventure. All, all, all about it. What you thought and what you said and how you managed to carry off the whole crazy caper.”

# *10*

I KEPT THE CHILDREN UP LATE GETTING THE DETAILS. Jamie and I played war while Claudia talked into the tape recorder. Jamie ended up with two aces and twelve cards more than I; the game cost me thirty-four cents. I still don't know how he does it. It was my deck of cards; but I was somewhat preoccupied listening to Claudia and interrupting her with questions. And then there was that telephone call from the children's parents. I knew you'd tell them, Saxonberg. I knew it! What a combination you are: soft heart and hard head. It was all I could do to persuade them to stay home and let me deliver the children in the morning. Mrs. Kincaid kept asking if they were bruised or maimed. I think she has read too many accounts of lost children in the newspapers. You realize now why I insisted that they stay overnight. I wanted all sides of the bargain kept, and I had to get my information. Besides I had promised them a ride home in the Rolls Royce, and I never cheat when the stakes are high.

When it came to be Jamie's turn to talk into the tape recorder, I thought that I would never get him to quit fussing with the switches. He enjoyed saying something and then erasing it. Finally, I scolded him, "You're not Sir Lawrence Olivier playing Hamlet, you know. All I want are the facts and how you felt. Not a theatrical production."

"You want me to be accurate, don't you?"

"Yes, but I also want you to finish."

Claudia asked for a tour of the house while Jamie told his story. She asked about everything. We rode the elevator up to the third floor, and she went from one room to the next. I hadn't been through the entire house for a long time, so I enjoyed the tour, too. We talked; we both enjoyed that also. Claudia told me about her routine at home. When we came back to the black marble bathroom, she told me how she came to take a bath there earlier. I allowed her to pick the bedroom where she would sleep that night.

Very early the next morning I had Sheldon drive them to Greenwich. I'm enclosing a copy of his report for your amusement, Saxonberg; you ought to be in a mood to laugh now.

> The boy, madam, spent the first five minutes of the trip pushing every button in the back seat. I transported them in the Rolls Royce as you requested. He pushed some buttons at least twelve times; others I stopped counting at five. He seemed to regard the button panel, madam, as some sort of typewriter or piano or I.B.M. computer. Without realizing it he pushed the button to the intercom *on* and neglected to push it off. In this way I overheard all their conversation; they thought they were privately sealed behind the glass screen that divides the front seat from the back. The girl was quiet while the other tested things. Everything, I might add.
>
> Finally, the girl remarked to the other, "Why do you suppose she sold Angel in the first place? Why didn't she just donate it to the museum?"
>
> "Because she's tight. That's why. She said so," the boy answered.
>
> "That's not the reason. If she were tight, and she knew it was worth so much, she would never have sold it for $225."
>
> Thank goodness the girl interested him in conversation. He stopped pushing buttons. Besides neglecting to turn off the intercom, he also neglected to turn off the windshield wipers on the rear window. I might add, madam, that it was not raining.
>
> "Well, she sold it at auction, silly. At an auction you have to sell it to the highest bidder. No one bid higher than $225. It's that simple."
>
> The girl replied, "She didn't sell it for the money. She would have shown her evidence if she really wanted a big price. She sold it for the fun of it. For excitement."
>
> "Maybe she didn't have room for it anymore."
>
> "In that museum of a house? There're rooms upstairs that. . . oh! Jamie, the statue is only two feet tall. She could have tucked it into any corner.
>
> "Why do *you* think she sold it?"
>
> The girl thought a minute. (I was hoping she would answer soon, madam. Before the boy got interested in the buttons again.) "Because

after a time having a secret and nobody knowing you have a secret is no fun. And although you don't want others to know what the secret is, you want them to at least know you have one."

I observed from the rear view mirror, madam, that the little boy grew quiet. He looked at the girl and said, "You know, Claude, I'm going to save my money and my winnings, and I'm going to visit Mrs. Frankweiler again." A long pause, then, "There's something about our running away that I forgot to say into the tape recorder."

The girl said nothing.

"Wanna come, Claude? We won't tell anyone.

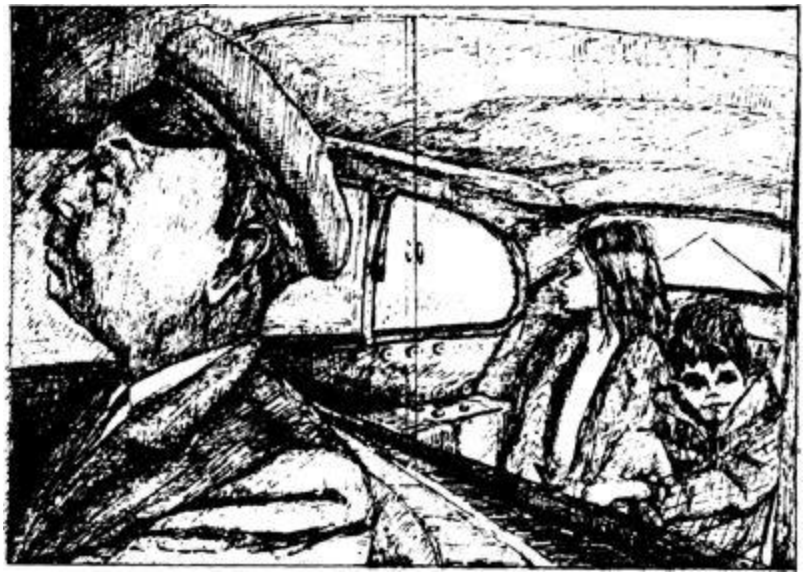
"How much did you win last night?" the girl asked.

"Only thirty-four cents. She's'a lot sharper than Bruce."

"Maybe my twenty-five cents from the cornflakes came already. That would make fifty-nine." The girl was silent for a few minutes before she asked, "Do you think she meant that stuff about motherhood?"

The boy shrugged his shoulders. "Let's visit her every time we save enough money. We won't tell anyone. We won't stay overnight. We'll just tell Mom and Dad that we're going bowling or something, and we'll take a train up instead."

"We'll adopt her," the girl suggested. "We'll become her kids, sort of."



"She's too old to be a mother. She said so herself. Besides, we already have one."

"She'll become our grandmother, then, since ours are deceased."

"And that will be our secret that we won't even share with her. She'll be the only woman in the world to become a grandmother with never becoming a mother first."

I drove the car to the address they gave me, madam. The shades were up, and I could see a quite handsome man and a young matron watching by the window. I also thought I saw our own Mr. Saxonberg. The boy had opened the doors even before I had completely stopped. That is a very dangerous thing to do. A much younger creature, also a boy, came running out of the house immediately ahead of the others. As I drove away, this younger one was saying, "Boy! what a car. Hey, Claude, I'll be your *sponsibility* the rest of …"

The children, madam, neglected to say thank you …

Well, Saxonberg, that's why I'm leaving the drawing of Angel to Claudia and Jamie Kincaid, your two lost grandchildren that you were so worried about. Since they intend to make me their grandmother, and you already are their grandfather, that makes us—oh, well, I won't even think about that. You're not that good a poker player.

Rewrite my will with a clause about my bequeathing the drawing to them. Also put in a clause about that bed I mentioned, too. I guess I ought to donate it to the Metropolitan Museum. I haven't really begun to like donating things. You'll notice that everyone is getting these things after I'm dead. I should say *passed away*. After you have all those things written into my will, I'll sign the new version. Sheldon and Parks can be witnesses. The signing of the will will take place in the restaurant of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. You'll come there with me, dear Saxonberg, or lose me, your best client.

I wonder if Claudia and Jamie will come visit me again. I wouldn't mind if they did. You see, I still have an edge; I know one bit more of a secret than they do. They don't know that their grandfather has been my lawyer for forty-one years. (And I recommend that for your own good, you not tell them, Saxonberg.)

By the way I heard a radio interview by the new Commissioner of Parks in New York City. He said that his budget had been cut. When asked by a reporter where the money that should have been spent for the parks was going, the commissioner replied that most of it was going towards increased security for the Metropolitan Museum. Suspecting that something special had prompted this move, I asked Sheldon to call his friend, Morris the guard, to find out if anything unusual had been discovered lately.

Morris reported that a violin case was found in a sarcophagus last week. A trumpet case was found two days later. Morris says that guards who have worked at the museum for a year have seen everything; those who have worked there for six months have seen half of everything. They once discovered a set of false teeth on the seat of an Etruscan chariot. They sent the children's cases to Lost and Found. They are still there. Full of gray-washed underwear and a cheap transistor radio. No one has claimed them yet.

# *Something More*

AN AFTERWORD FROM THE AUTHOR

In 2002, E. L. Konigsburg wrote an afterword for a special thirty-fifth anniversary edition of *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. It is reprinted here, along with material from the 1968 Newbery-Caldecott Awards Dinner.

I WAS ASKED TO WRITE A FOREWORD TO THIS 35TH anniversary edition of *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, but I myself never read forewords until *after* I've read the book, and then I read them only if I really liked the book and want to know something more. So instead of a foreword, I have written an afterword and hope that you are reading it now because you liked this book and want to know something more.

Since its first publication in 1967, there have been a lot of *somethings-more* that have changed New York City, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and me.

Strangely, the events of September 11, 2001, that have changed forever both the conscience and configuration of New York would not have changed Claudia and Jamie. The skyline that they would have seen when they arrived in Manhattan would not have been very different from that which we now (sadly) see. The twin towers of the World Trade Center were not completed until 1973, six years after *From the Mixed-up Files* was first published. The conscience of the city, too, has changed since the terrorist attacks. The spirit of the city is courteous and patriotic now; in 1967, New York was the scene of student protests, antiwar demonstrations, and race riots. But Claudia and Jamie would have been as unaffected by the spirit of patriotism and cooperation now as they were by the spirit of protest and contentiousness then, for neither civic pride nor civil disobedience was part of their emotional landscape. Theirs was a journey inside, and Claudia's war was with herself.

The trains from Greenwich still arrive at Grand Central Station, and Claudia would still complain to Jamie "that it is over forty blocks" from there to the museum, and Jamie would still complain about the price of bus fare (which now costs almost as much as the adult one-way train fare from Greenwich cost then). Olivetti no longer has a typewriter on a stand outside a building on Fifth Avenue. Olivetti no longer makes manual typewriters. (Does anyone?) The Donnell Branch Library on Fifty-third Street still

caters to children—even though the card catalog Claudia and Jamie used has gone the way of the manual typewriter.

With the exception of one reader who wrote me a letter scolding me for writing that two kids could live on twenty-four dollars and forty-three cents for a whole week in New York City, I have not had anyone quibble about the cost of living. Most readers focus on their rent-free accommodation in the museum and recognize that these details—accurate for their time—are the verisimilitude that allow Claudia and Jamie to live beyond the exact details of life in 1967.

Since 1967, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has gotten bigger and busier and has put a new face on Fifth Avenue. Entrance was free then, and it isn't now. There was a fountain in the restaurant then, and there isn't now. The bed (picture on page 37) where Claudia and Jamie slept has been dismantled, and just last year they closed the little chapel where Claudia and Jamie said their prayers (page 88). Even so, for thirty-five years, the staff at the museum has been asked so many questions about this book that in the spring of last year, they devoted a whole issue of their publication *MuseumKids* to it. It is titled *The "Mixed-up Files" Issue*.

One dark and stormy night in October 1995, a teacher at New York University, an authority on sixteenth-century Italian sculpture, looked inside the glass door of the French Embassy's cultural services building at 972 Fifth Avenue—practically across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There was a party going on, and there in the center of the lobby stood a three-foot marble statue of a youth. She had seen the statue before, but on this night the rotunda was brightly lighted, and she saw the statue in a new way. She studied the statue, she did a lot of research, and months later she announced to the world that the statue in the lobby is a cupid, an early work of Michelangelo.

> "What's the difference between an angel and a cupid?" Jamie inquired.
>
> "Why?" Claudia asked.
>
> "Because there's a lost cupid for sure."
>
> "Angels wear clothes and wings and are Christian. Cupids wear bows and arrows; they are naked and pagan." (page 73)

The statue in the lobby is naked. The statue in the lobby has a quiver of arrows. However, the arguments pro and con about its authenticity continue and exactly echo those that Mrs. Frankweiler speaks of on page 152.

On January 23, 1996, when the *New York Times* carried a front-page story about the cupid in the lobby, I got a lot of calls and letters asking me, Did I know about the statue when I wrote *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler?* The answer is, I did not. I made up the story of Angel, prompted by a different story that appeared in the *New York Times* on October 25, 1965. That article announced that the Metropolitan Museum of Art had purchased at auction a plaster and stucco statue that dated from the time of the Renaissance. (Even in the days of twenty-cent bus fare, the purchase price of $225 was enough of a bargain that the acquisition made page-one news.) And that is the story that I adapted to my fiction. "Angel" became part of Claudia's story about finding herself, about how the greatest adventure lies not in running away but in looking inside, and the greatest discovery is not in finding out who made a statue but in finding out what makes you.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art still does not own a piece of sculpture by Michelangelo, but to a whole generation of readers the "discovery" of the cupid in the lobby was a case of life imitating art.

I, too, have changed since 1967. When I wrote *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, I was the mother of three living in a suburb of New York City. I am now the grandmother of five living on the beach in Florida. My daughter, Laurie, who posed for Claudia, has a farm in the Finger Lakes of New York; she grows peaches and raspberries, watermelons and cantaloupes, and calls her place The Melon Foundation. She is the mother of Samuel Todd, about whom I have written and illustrated *Samuel Todd's Book of Great Colors* and *Samuel Todd's Book of Great Inventions*. My son Ross, who posed for Jamie, is the father of Amy Elizabeth, about whom I have written and illustrated *Amy Elizabeth Explores Bloomingdale's*, and Sarah. Because he has never cheated at cards —or anything—but like Jamie is excellent with money, he is a consultant in Washington, D.C., and is also my financial adviser. My son Paul, who is the young man sitting in the front of the bus in the picture facing page 13, is a computer scientist, and it is he who convinced me to try writing on the computer—which I do except when I turn my back on it and write in

longhand as I did for the entire manuscript of *From the Mixed-up Files*. Paul is the father of Anna and Meg. I have promised Sarah and Anna and Meg that I would write eponymous books for them. I hoped it would make them look up *eponymous*, and it did, but they are growing up faster than I can write, so I have yet to keep my promise. I am not yet as old as Mrs. Frankweiler (page 152), and the years in which I can say that are still in the double digits, but they are counting down.

My beloved husband, David, to whom this book is dedicated, and Jean Karl, my stalwart editor, both loved this book from the time of its birth (see the first letter Jean wrote me about it; it's on the next page). David died last year and Jean died the year before. Sadly, they both will miss this anniversary. And I shall miss them both forever.

Over the years, kids have written to me and asked me to write a sequel. When this book won the 1968 Newbery Medal, I wrote a small piece that was given to people who attended the awards banquet. I am enclosing it here, after Jean Karl's letter. It is the only sequel I will ever write. I won't write another, for there is no *something-more* to tell about Claudia Kincaid and Jamie and Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. They are as they were, and as I hope they will be for the next thirty-five years. I wish them Happy Anniversary and a long and happy life, and I hope you do too.

***E. L. Konigsburg***

ATHENEUM PUBLISHERS 162 EAST 38 STREET
NEW YORK CITY 10016 MURRAY HILL 5-3010

July 21, 1966

Mrs. Elaine L. Konigsburg
Apartment 31
325 King Street
Port Chester, N.Y.

Dear Mrs. Konigsburg:

Since you came in with FROM THE MIXED-UP FILES OF MRS. BASIL E. FRANKWEILER, I have found myself chuckling over it more than once. I have read it only once, but the memory of the incidents comes up every once in awhile.

I do really want this book. I will be sending you a contract very shortly. I have some suggestions that I think will make it even better, but don't want to make them until I have had a chance to read it through again. You will be hearing from me shortly.

Sincerely yours,

Jean Karl
Editor of Children's Books

JK:ks

***From the Mixed-up files of Mrs. E. L. Konigsburg***

CLAUDIA

What are you writing?

JAMIE

A letter.

CLAUDIA

In pencil? Who ever heard of writing a letter in pencil? You're supposed to use a pen. Where's your pen?

JAMIE

I'm renting it to Bruce. Say, Claude, do you spell Newbery like I KNEW the answer or like I wish I had a NEW sister?

CLAUDIA

N-E-W-B-E-R-Y.

© 1968 by E. L. Konigsburg

JAMIE

What kind of berry is that? I never heard of a one-R-berry.

CLAUDIA

Now you have. What's Newbery got to do with letters?

JAMIE

You know all that stuff we told to Frankweiler?

CLAUDIA

You mean Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler?

JAMIE

The same. Well, she put it all down into a book, and it won the Newbery Medal. How do you spell medal?

CLAUDIA

M-E-D-A-L.

JAMIE

Why isn't there any T in medal?

CLAUDIA

Because METAL is what MEDALS are made of. So what if Mrs. Frankweiler won the Newbery? I knew that.

JAMIE

Well, Claude, I figure that if the medal is gold, she better cut me in. I've been broke ever since we left her place.

# The
# Newbery—Caldecott Awards Dinner

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**Imperial Ballroom**
**MUEHLEBACH HOTEL**
**Kansas City, Missouri**
***June 25, 1968***